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# THE TEACHING OF KARL BARTH

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## AN EXPOSITION

BY

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*The Holy Spirit in St Paul*

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*The Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*
etc.

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*ἅιτινες ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ*
*συνήθλησάν μοι*

# PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is to interpret the theological ideas of Karl Barth to English readers. The name of Barth has become familiar to readers of religious papers and magazines during the past five years. To Dr Adolf Keller seems to belong the honour of first bringing the name and the ideas it represents to the attention of the British public by his articles on "A Theology of Crisis" in the defunct *Expositor* in 1924 (Nos. 3, 4). "The Teaching of Karl Barth" was the subject of an article in the *Hibbert Journal* in 1927 (April) by J. M'Connachie; a year later Dr H. R. Mackintosh of Edinburgh contributed a brief article to the *Expository Times*, in the series dealing with Leaders of Theological Thought. A wider public became aware of the new ferment in Germany by the brilliant article headed, "The New Theologians: From Harnack to Barth," in the *Times Literary Supplement*, giving an account of Recent German Literature (April 18, 1929). In *The Review of the Churches* (October 1929) Dr J. K. Mozley reviewed the only one of Barth's books to appear in English—*The Word of God and the Word of Man* (Hodder), under the caption, "The Theology of Karl Barth." In that article Dr Mozley attempted

to elucidate the ' theology of crisis ' which the *Times* reviewer had described " as a system not easy to grasp. It is subtle, difficult, baffling." Dr Mozley called in to his aid Max Strauch's book, *Die Theologie Karl Barths* (The Theology of K. Barth : C. Kaiser, Muenchen).

The above articles labour under the drawback of being limited almost entirely to two books of Barth's, his *Rom.* and the collection of addresses contained in the English version just mentioned. Since then Barth has published several books—a second volume of essays and addresses, two expository works, one on 1 Corinthians xv., the other on Philippians, and a large volume on *Dg.*, " Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes " (The Doctrine of the Word of God). The idea of ' Crisis ' has been expounded by Prof. R. Bultmann in his book *Jesus*, and by Prof. E. Brunner in two elaborate works, *MW.* and *M.* (Mysticism and The Word : The Mediator). Unfortunately for the British reader not well versed in German, Barth's *Romans* and this additional material have not been rendered into English.

It is for this type of reader, who has not the knowledge or the leisure to read long, un-indexed German volumes, that this book is intended. The average Christian minister and Christian worker who is interested in religious and theological problems, and even the ' good European ' who wants to know how men are thinking on the Continent concerning fundamental things, may find this book not altogether unprofitable to read. For such a reader the English equiva-

lents of German titles of books have been given, and the salient passages translated. It has been difficult to avoid long translations of text—Barth is a prolix writer—and copious lists of footnotes and references, in which German writers delight, in order to keep the book within handy compass and a reasonable price. But brief summaries may be expected in lieu of literal translations except at crucial places of discussion. It is hoped that sufficient indications have been given to enable the German-reading student to find his way to and through the extensive literature which has grown during the last ten years round Barth and his associates.

Perhaps the best preparation for the reader limited to English would be to read again Dr A. E. Garvie's book, *The Ritschlian Theology* (T. & T. Clark), and the same writer's short account of the 'religious-historical' method pursued of late, and still, by German theologians, in the article on Christianity in Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*. He should also acquaint himself with two, at least, of Schleiermacher's books, the *Reden* (Discourses) and *Der Christliche Glaube* (The Christian Faith). The former was put into English by Dr John Oman, *On Religion* (Kegan Paul), and the latter, after nearly a century, has at last appeared in an English dress, rendered under Dr H. R. Mackintosh's supervision by a group of scholars (T. & T. Clark). Much of the work of Barth and Brunner centres on these books, together with R. Otto's *Das Heilige* (*The Idea of the 'Holy'*; English version).

If the question be asked whether it is worth while to trouble to try and interpret the 'Barthian theology,' there can be little doubt as to the answer. Dr Mozley says, "The extraordinary unlikeness of Barth's theology to anything we usually meet in Anglican or Free Church circles makes it all the more worthy of study. Barth does not fit in either with the orthodoxy or with the liberalism which are familiar to us or with any current attempt to combine the two . . . Barth's methods of thought and speech and his characteristic emphases are far removed from ours. But if we neglect him we shall miss a great deal."

Here is an attempt to cut through the 'barbed-wire' entanglements of historical criticism, psychology of mysticism, subjectivism of religious experience, relativism of history, so as to get right back to the 'self-revealing Word of God' on which the Reformers, Luther and Calvin, built their great fabrics. On Barth's lips the name of God carries with it an awe and an impressive force, and, as a New York reviewer has truly said, presents "a challenge such as we have not listened to in this generation." Here is given a message which every Christian preacher and worker needs, or at least should heed, a message of the Living, Speaking God to this troubled, distracted world reeling from the shock of its 'Great War.' Whether the author has succeeded in 'interpreting Barth' is for the reader to decide.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

## K. BARTH

*WG.* = Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie. English title, "The Word of God and the Word of Man."

*Rom.* = Der Roemer-brief.

*TK.* = Die Theologie und die Kirche.

*Dg.* = Dogmatik, I. Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes.

## E. BRUNNER

*MW.* = Die Mystik und das Wort.

*M.* = Der Mittler.

*TC.* = The Theology of Crisis.

# PART I

## THE MAN: HIS FRIENDS: THEIR MILIEU

### CHAPTER I

#### KARL BARTH AND HIS 'SCHOOL'

KARL BARTH, round whose name centres the great discussion now agitating the theological dove-cotes of Europe, was born at Bâsle, in Switzerland, in 1886. He was born in the atmosphere of theology, for his father was a Professor of the Reformed Church and author of two useful books, *Die Hauptprobleme des Lebens Jesu* and *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (The Chief Problems of the Life of Jesus; Introduction to the New Testament). As became a Swiss, Karl went to school at Berne, passed into the University there, and proceeded thence to the other Universities at Berlin, Tübingen, and Marburg. At Marburg he came under the influence of Wilhelm Herrmann, whose book, *Communion with God*, is well known to English readers. The Neo-Kantian school at Marburg has left its mark upon the philosophical outlook of Barth, and the 'radicalism' of its theological bent, under Johannes Weiss, with its stress on *Interims-ethik* and eschatology tinges all Barth's thoughts. In his early 'twenties' Barth assisted Martin Rade on the religious paper, *Die Christliche Welt* (The Christian

World). These two years as a journalist have helped Barth to forge a style which strikes home with great force. To that we shall return later.

From the office of the *Christliche Welt* Barth went, in 1909, to take charge of the German Reformed Congregation at Geneva; then he took up the pastorate of the village of Safenwil, in Canton Aargau, where he remained from 1911 to 1921, winning renown by his speech and pen. Some of the addresses delivered during and just after the war are to be found in the book rendered into English by the American, Douglas Horton, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (Hodder). In 1921 Barth was called to a Chair at Göttingen, as Professor of Reformed Theology. This chair is not a University post, but is maintained by gifts from the American Reformed Church. In 1925 Barth was transferred to the official Chair of Theology at Münster, in Westphalia, and in 1929 he moved to the more important sphere at Bonn. It will be seen that Barth's public career has been passed almost entirely within the basin of the Rhine and its tributaries.

Karl Barth is a hard worker and a prolific writer. He burst upon the world of scholars with his *Rom.* in 1919, and he could say with Lord Byron, "I woke one morning to find myself famous." Within three years it ran into three editions; he then worked over it and in large measure recast it for the fourth edition; in 1929 it came out in the fifth edition. It is a bulky book in size; it runs to over 540 pages, and the size makes it a venturesome risk for any publisher

to have a translation made into English or any other language. The only work to appear in an English dress has been mentioned, viz., Dr Horton's translation. Many of Barth's characteristic turns of thought, found in the *Römerbrief*, are given in this volume of addresses. Two smaller books of expositions deal with (*a*) 1 Cor. xv., with the title, *Die Auferstehung der Toten* (The Resurrection from the Dead), and (*b*) *Von christlichen Leben* (Of the Christian Life) expounding Rom. xii. In 1928 he issued an Exposition of the Epistle to the Philippians (*Erklärung des Philipperbriefes*) which is intended for the general reader, as well as for scholars. The same year saw another volume of essays and addresses, under the title, Theology and the Church (*T.K.*). The subjects dealt with cover a wide range and help to define Barth's standpoint with reference to other Churches, the present state of theology, and the ideas held by Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Feuerbach, and W. Herrmann. In the pulpit Barth has been busy, and two volumes of sermons have been issued, in collaboration with Eduard Thurneysen, *Komm, Schöpfer Geist* and *Suchet Gott, so werdet ihr leben* (Come, Creator Spirit; Seek ye God, so shall ye live). But the more systematic thought of Barth is to be sought in his book, *Dg.* (The Doctrine of the Word of God, with sub-title, "Christian Doctrine in Outline," p. 488). This is the first volume of Barth's *Dg.*

In addition to the above works Barth has been busy with the bi-monthly periodical devoted to the new movement, *Zwischen den Zeiten* (Between

the Times). The student of Barth cannot afford to neglect this paper, for round Barth has gathered a band of writers, and he himself, along with Friedrich Gogarten and E. Thurneysen, are constant contributors. The journalistic service with the *Christliche Welt* stands Barth in good stead; this is a very live-wire for transmitting energy and heat at least, if, as some think, there is not much light, to the young generation of students in the Colleges. Some of the titles will enable English readers to see what the writers are thinking about. "What is God's Word?" "Prophet and Prophetic Word," "The Sources of our Preaching," "The Word of God and the Message of Peace," "The Word of God and the Creed," "The Word of Man and God's Word in Preaching," this is by Barth. Many papers bear upon the Church: "Church and Theology," by Barth, "The Word and the Question as to the Church," by Gogarten, "State and Church," by Thurneysen, "The Possibilities of a Church," "The Nature and Limits of Church Law."

Drs Gogarten and Thurneysen, the former a Lutheran at Jena, the latter of the Reformed Church, for years Pastor at St Gall, now at Münster, near Basle, have both written on Barthian lines. Gogarten is of a philosophic cast of mind: his chief works are, *Die religiöse Entscheidung; Von Glauben und Offenbarung; Illusionen* (The Religious Crisis; On Faith and Revelation; Illusions. A recent work deals with Theological Tradition and Theological Work). Thurneysen, as mentioned above, has issued two

joint volumes of sermons with Barth, and five of his papers to *Zwischen den Zeiten* have been included in a volume of essays, *Das Wort Gottes u. d. Kirche* (Munich, 1927, 231 pp.). Two of his books are brief biographies of Dostojewsky and Christoph Blumhardt; Barth makes frequent reference to these in his *Romans*.

Less closely attached to Barth are Professors Emil Brunner and Rudolf Bultmann. Brunner occupies the Chair of Systematic Theology in Zwingli's old city of Zurich. He is a very able theologian: his chief works are, *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis, und Glaube* (Experience, Cognition, and Faith); Mysticism and the Word (*MW.*), and The Mediator (*M.*). The book on Mysticism bears the sub-title, "The Opposition between modern interpretation of Religion and Christian Faith exhibited in Schleiermacher's Theology." This indicates the complete dead-set against one mode of thought which has prevailed for a century in German theology. The book on the Mediator breaks with the Ritschlian School and the recent religious-historical schools and modern psychology of religion. Both are large works embracing between them about a thousand pages, and are practically complete treatises on Christian doctrine. One book of Brunner's, *TC.*, has been translated into English. Prof. Bultmann is at Marburg and has gained a name as a drastic critic of the text of the Gospels; his affinities with Barth are best seen in his book, *Jesus* (Berlin, 1926), in which the theology of crisis is vigorously expounded and the impact of Johannes Weiss'

views on Eschatology is plainly to be seen. English readers will find much of Weiss' teaching embodied in Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. The latest writing of Bultmann's deals with *The Idea of Revelation in the New Testament*, and links on to Barth's central message of the Word of God.

The activity of the Barthian School has been felt in other lands, especially where the Lutheran and Reformed Churches have a good footing. In Holland Professor Th. L. Haitjema of Gröningen has issued a brochure, which has been translated into German, *Karl Barth's Critical Theology*, and in Sweden Torsten Bohlin—a great authority on Sören Kierkegaard, one of Barth's 'great men'—has issued a weighty book on *Glaube und Offenbarung* (Faith and Revelation) with the sub-title, "A Critical Study of the 'Dialectical' Theology." In Denmark a religious paper has been started to issue Barth's ideas. An introduction to the theology of crisis has been issued by Max Strauch, *Die Theologie Karl Barths*. But lack of space forbids us to mention the host of pamphlets, tracts, essays, and even large books which have poured out of the presses in Germany this past five years, taking up various phases of the 'new-Reformation Theology.' A glance at the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* will find allusions to Barth on every third page or so.

Seven years ago Barth disclaimed the title of 'theology' for his work: "I do not presume to put alongside . . . of the great and venerable creators of theological systems anything equal or

of like measure," he said ; " it is rather a kind of query in the margin, it is a ' pinch of cinnamon ' to flavour and correct others." And at that time he mildly objected to being called the founder of a ' school ' at all. " So far as Thurneysen, Gogarten, and I really form a ' school ' our work is superfluous." But the past seven years have made a vast difference. The second volume of collected essays bears on the ' Jacket ' the words, " Sign-posts for the erection (*Neubau*) of Theology and Church." " The theology of correction," as he styled his teaching in 1922, has put its question mark upon nearly every dominant idea in theological circles, and the criticism of Barth comes from every side, from Fundamentalist, Liberal theologians, Ritschlians, religious-historicals, and especially followers of the mystical schools of Otto and Heiler.

The great impression made by the writings of Barth and his group has been deepened by the eloquence of Barth himself on the public platform. He has been in much demand at Retreats, Ministers' Fellowship Gatherings, Autumn Assemblies of his own Church, and has gone far afield. Admirers have described his addresses as in tone like those of an Old Testament prophet, and he has been heard in Hamburg, Amsterdam, Halberstadt, Elberfeld, and elsewhere. As ministers attend these gatherings in large numbers, the spread of his views has been much furthered thereby. He gave a Report of the World Council of the Alliance of Reformed Presbyterian Churches, which was held in Cardiff in 1925, to the German

General Assembly, and made a deep impression by his caustic, searching diagnosis of the state of Christian Churches generally. He has been hailed as 'a young Luther,' as leading a new Youth Movement, and critics have complained of the way in which young theological hero-worshippers have 'learned his rich accents,' and some of his tricks of expression, without sharing his extensive theological knowledge. In the preface to his *Dg.* Professor Barth alludes to the many invitations extended to him to give addresses on his teaching, and with charming modesty disclaims the praise lavished upon him. In this he is true to his leading Calvinist tenet that " glory is God's alone." Now that the duties of the Professorate engage his time, Dr Barth prefers the medium of the printed page as " a worthier and more useful manner of carrying on the discussion." One feels, however, that something of the zeal of the 'hot gospeller' has been lost since he donned the Professor's gown, though the leading ideas are still maintained.

In those public addresses Barth attacked with scorn and heat his contemporaries who hold the views of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Troeltsch, which he styles " the new Protestantism." The very width of the extent of attack on modern teachings makes it difficult to summarize his views. It presupposes a knowledge of current ideas which prevail in Germany only possible to one in constant touch with religious papers and pamphlets issued there. The suspension of means of communication during the war, the

publishers' dread of the word 'theology' on a book cover, and their unwillingness to take risks by securing translations have left a gap in our general knowledge of what men are thinking about in Germany. And then, as Professor Niebergall of Marburg said, when reviewing Barth's first volume of addresses, five years ago, "Many works would be required to present Barth's ways of thinking with reference to all that is current amongst us as regards historical-critical, religious-philosophical, and apologetical knowledge, and also the understanding of the Gospel."

To understand Professor Barth's views one must know something of how he came to his present point of view. He has told us that he entered upon his twelve years' ministry with a theology taken from his "unforgettable teacher, Wilhelm Herrmann, grafted upon principles learned, less consciously than unconsciously, in my native home—the principles of the Reformed Churches. Once in the ministry I found myself growing away from theological habits of thought and being forced back on the *minister's* problem, the sermon. I sought to find my way between the problem of human life on the one hand and the problem of the Bible on the other. As a minister, I wanted to speak to the people in the infinite contradiction of their life, but to speak on the not less infinite message of the Bible, as much of a riddle as life." So it came about "that the familiar situation of the minister on Saturday at his desk and on Sunday in his pulpit crystallized

into a marginal note to all theology which finally assumed the volume form of a complete commentary upon the Epistle to the Romans." This critical situation and embarrassment he found to be "an explanation of the character of all theology. These marks and exclamation points which are the very existence of a minister play really no rôle at all in the theology I knew." And so "I finally went to work upon the Romans, which at first was to be only an essay to help me to know my own mind. And so there grew what threatens to expand somewhat into 'my theology,' or let us rather say, 'Theology of Correction'" (*WG.*, pp. 100-103). Both Gogarten and Thurneysen, as pastors, had a somewhat similar experience. Thus Barth came to the *leit-motiv* of his *Dg.* that doctrine is to be tested and regulated by preaching: "Church preaching is the starting-point and the practical end of *Dogmatik*." This is the position held by the late Dr T. C. Edwards, the Welsh theologian, who said, "The worth of a doctrine is, Can it be preached?"

Emil Brunner's line of approach appears to have gone, not through the practical difficulties of the pastorate, but through the study of Schleiermacher and mysticism. He has specialized in the philosophy of religion, and already, as he entered the Chair at Zürich, had grasped the central idea of this group of 'Swiss theologians,' as they are called, with his introductory lecture on "Revelation as the Basis and Object of Theology." His early brochure, *Gnosis and Faith*, which he styled, "An attempt to determine the

bounds of theology and philosophy," has been expanded into two larger books, *Religionsphilosophie evangelischer Theologie* (The Philosophy of Religion of the Evangelical Theology) and *MW.* (Mysticism and the Word, second edition, 1927). This latter book is directed almost entirely against the theology of Schleiermacher, whose principles are shown to be those of mysticism generally. Here Brunner breaks the spear of Rudolf Otto, and makes use of the German translation of Evelyn Underhill's book on Mysticism—almost the only reference in his works to a British author. He evidently seems not to know of Dean Inge! In his preface to the book on Mysticism Brunner tells us that "for years he had lived on the borders, and for some time even within the midst, of the Mystic country, and had been forced to see in mysticism the near—all too near—foe of Christian theology," and now fights it, and all attempts at synthesis, at bridging the gap between Faith and the Word of God and the faith of man in himself.

Common to Barth and his friends is the experience of having passed through periods of deep questioning of prevalent modes of thought and finding themselves all the time in presence of man, his ideas and feelings, his constructions and interpretations of his religious moods and impulses, and never arriving at anything more than the relative whilst only something final and absolute could satisfy their deepest longings. This questing and questioning and cross-questioning and moving back to ' the previous question,' the

'ground' from which all experience must start, when expressed in terms of thought, is the 'dialectic method.'

To return to Barth's development; we have much valuable insight into the workings of his mind in the discourse on "The Doctrine of the Dogmatic Principles in W. Herrmann" (*Die dogmatische Prinzipienlehre bei Wilhelm Herrmann*) contained in the volume *TK.* (pp. 240-284). In this address Barth describes with great charm the friendly relations between pupil and teacher. As a lad of twenty in Berlin, Barth received a copy of Herrmann's *Ethik*, which gave him, as Herder did to Stilling, 'the impulse to eternal motion.' Five minutes before taking orders and mounting the pulpit for the first time the post brought from Herrmann the fourth edition of the *Ethik*, as a *vade mecum* on entering the ministry. Again, in 1918, Barth received a book with the laconic inscription, "Nevertheless, with best greetings from W. Herrmann." That 'nevertheless' indicated how far Barth had travelled from his teacher. Barth dwells with delight on Herrmann's characteristics, his simple piety, his somewhat monotonous delivery of the Ethics-lectures, his 'cure of the souls' of the students, and here occurs almost the only reference to British religious life. Barth quotes from an article by Dr H. R. Mackintosh (p. 271, note 76), wherein Mackintosh drew the comparison between the different styles of Henry Drummond's addresses and Herrmann's lectures and the similarity of the atmosphere of both which must

often have led to conversions. But the address of Barth analyses with sharp distinction Herrmann's leading principles and daringly claims "to understand Herrmann altogether differently than Herrmann understood himself." The leading ideas brought out are: the universal validity of the Christian religion, the 'no roads this way' through the paths of scientific knowledge of the world, or through study of man's own mental life, or by way of Kant's ethical idealism, or by Schleiermacher's doctrine of "the feeling of absolute dependence upon God," or even by "historic facts as to the life of Jesus." Here one sees Barth brought up against the different trains of thought that moved through his teacher's lectures: the Kantian and post-Kantian ethics, the Ritschlian distrust of metaphysics and resort to history for a firm footing from which to defend the faith, Ritschl's dislike of mysticism which Barth shares with Herrmann, the equal dislike of pietism of the Moravian brand, the dissatisfaction with 'psychology of religious experience,' and the criticism is made, in five aspects, against the vagueness of Herrmann's use of terms, and rounds up by saying, "Herrmann gave 'no way to religion'" (p. 272).

Barth questions his teacher sharply, but gets hints which enabled him to find 'a theology' fitting him to face the contradictions of life. Instead of man's search, like Job's, to find out God, "should not dogmatic rather have to speak of God's way to us?" he asks. The questioning man finds himself then put in question and

another hint of Herrmann's is taken up which forms the pivot on which all Barth's ideas turn. Herrmann had said that "in order to take part in the religion of Protestantism we must become certain of the Eternal God who communes with us Himself. That happens to no one without great convulsions of soul. For that we must live through the particular situation, in which at present we find ourselves, with seriousness and truthfulness. If that is right, then it is for theology to show that it is the concern of Christianity to come to an arrangement with our own present existence" (*Verkehr des Christen*, ed. iv., p. 196: Eng. trans., Communion with God, p. 237). Barth finds that 'present existence' one of 'crisis.' God comes down to man in the Logos, the God-man, Jesus Christ. Barth has some stinging words to say about the defects of Herrmann's Christology. "The orthodox Christology is a down-rushing torrent from a glacier nine thousand feet up; with it something can be done. Herrmann's Christology is the hopeless attempt to force up to the same height a stagnant pool, by means of a hand-pump" (p. 276). And yet with all this biting speech Barth can still say that Herrmann showed him the way through his difficulties and express his thankfulness for the critical method which brought him at last, beyond Herrmann's position, to the 'point of view' which bears the name of 'the Barthian theology.'

Barth gives interesting information concerning the writers who have influenced his thought.

His "ancestral line runs back through Kierkegaard to Luther and Calvin and so to Paul and Jeremiah. . . . It does *not* run back through Martensen to Erasmus . . . it *does not include* Schleiermacher. The very names Kierkegaard, Luther, Paul, and Jeremiah suggest what Schleiermacher never possessed, a clear and direct apprehension of the truth that man is made to serve *God* and not God serve man. The negation and loneliness of Jeremiah's life in opposition to that of the kings, princes, people, *priests* and *prophets* of Judah—the keen and unremitting opposition of Paul to *religion* as exemplified in Judaism—Luther's break with the *piety* of the Middle Ages—Kierkegaard's attack on *Christianity*; all are characteristic of a certain way of speaking of *God* which Schleiermacher never arrived at" (*WG.*, pp. 195-197). When Barth had "to break with the dogmatic of Herrmann —done with the best of will—as the last stage of his development as a theologian," he adds that "those with whom he felt most at home were the two Blumhardts, Kierkegaard, H. F. Kohlbruegge (this name he doubly underscores as a great 'unknown'), I. A. Dorner, H. Kutter, Julius Mueller, F. Overbeck, and A. F. C. Vilmar" (*Dg.*, I., p. 6). Yet he feels that his doctrinal treatise must take a lonely way, as did his Romans commentary: breaking away from the general track followed by theologians nowadays. Yet not all alone, for Brunner's book on the Mediator keeps him company as a pathfinder back again behind 'modern Protestantism' to the view-

points of the great Reformers—Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin.

Some of the names given above are already known to British readers through translations of their works, notably Mueller, on Sin, and Dorner: of Overbeck Barth gives much information in the opening essay of "Theology and the Church," where the eschatological ideas are dwelt upon, but the outstanding name is that of the 'sad and melancholy Dane,' Soeren Kierkegaard.[1] The influence of Kierkegaard upon Barth and all the group around him is predominant. Barth himself declared in the preface to the fourth edition of his *Romans*: "I keep in mind always, as much as possible, what Kierkegaard described as the infinitely qualitative difference between time and eternity, both in its negative and positive meaning." This phrase recurs like a refrain in Brunner's criticisms of historism, psychologism, and romanticism in his books on mysticism and the introductory section of *M.* It runs like a thread through all the thinking of Gogarten in his book *Of Faith and Revelation*, and both Thurneysen and Bultmann are to be found quoting from Kierkegaard. In fact, the emphasis on the Either—Or, on faith as the only attitude of man towards God, and the criticism of conventional Christianity which mark the Barthian School are simply an under-scoring of this great

[1] It is a reproach to British publishers that no translation of this great thinker's works has been put before our public. The best article in English is in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vii., 696 *et seq.*, by A. Grieve; used by H. R. Mackintosh in art. "The Theology of Kierkegaard," *Congregational Quarterly*, July 1929.

Dane's ideas. Kierkegaard came again into vogue at the beginning of the century when his works were being translated into German and Barth caught the infection. Professor Willy Luettge of Heidelberg tells us how the young theological candidates for the ministry at Wittenberg "were startled and gripped by the power of Kierkegaard. The magnitudes of the Problematic and the Tragic, which here disturb the holiest, impressed itself unforgettably. All is posited on the metaphysical opposition of time and eternity . . . and this metaphysical tension, all of opposition, contradiction, conflict . . . this overpowering metaphysic with its climaxes, perils, paradoxes, unknown deeps, now remains strangely numb and un-living" (*Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1925, No. 11). Thus to the mental make-up of Barth we find these factors—the inherited tradition of the Reformed Church, the influence of Herrmann and his re-action under the stress of pastoral work, the ferment of Kierkegaard's ideas at the susceptible period of youth—all combining with the social unrest of the period which culminated in the Great War to give him his need of a gospel for a time of 'crisis.'

The criticism of the Christian-Socialists has played a great part in shaping Barth's attitude towards contemporary movements within the churches. Emil Brunner tells us that "the 'Barthian Theology' had as its origin the teaching of men like Blumhardt, Ragaz, and Kutter. . . . What separates us from our religious socialist

friends is neither their socialism nor their anti-militarism, but their belief that by such social activity the Kingdom of God is coming closer and closer and that such social-ethical activity can be detached from the preaching of the Gospel, from the Church and theological thought" (*TC.*, p. 87, note, 1929, Scribner).

Of the elder Blumhardt, Kutter, and Ragaz (both Socialists) a word must be said ere we proceed. Blumhardt wrote much on the Second Advent and the state of the departed, and early anticipated the study of eschatology which was carried to a climax by Johannes Weiss. His life has been written by Zuendel, the godfather of Brunner, and by Thurneysen. Kutter has written much: his book, *We Pastors*, has influenced Barth's pastoral practice, whilst his *My People: the Message of Jeremiah and our Times*, compares the situations at these widely different epochs and brings out the doctrine of the reality of the living God. He dwells on the godlessness of the present situation in national and social matters, in art and science, culture and church, marriage and family life. Another book of his deals with the problem of Revolution and Christianity, and by no means flatters the Churches. Ragaz stands for a 'simple Christianity': he has issued two large volumes on "Thy Kingdom Come"; another on Christ and Marx, and examined the careers of the two Blumhardts in *The Fight for the Kingdom of God in Blumhardt, Father and Son—and Further*, in addition he has a work to which Barth often refers, *Plato and We*. Barth levels

his scorn at the charge made by the school of Ragaz that his *Romans* was not 'simple.' "Simple to us is neither Paul's *Romans* nor the present situation in theology, nor the present world-situation, nor man's situation in general toward God. . . . Hard and complicated is man's life to-day in every relation" (*Rom.* ix.). But Barth owes much to his fellow-countryman on the ethical side, for many of Barth's ideas are an expansion of thoughts given by Ragaz in his book, *Du Sollst: Outlines of an Ethical World-view*, especially as regards world-peace and anti-militarism.

Passing from the authors who have influenced Barth and his friends, we must not omit to notice the peculiar situation they occupy as German-Swiss. They face the complex European tangles, political, social, and ecclesiastical, with deep interest and some detachment. Ecclesiastically they face both the Lutheran Church and the Roman Church, and this aspect will be dealt with in the next chapter. Then their thinking is marked by the French love of clarity and logic which has ever characterized Swiss theologians, yet with it is the German love for stating problems theoretically and penchant for metaphysics. The position of Switzerland on the map makes the Swiss observant of the currents of thought that sweep from the Urals to the Atlantic, and even beyond, to their brethren in the Reformed Church in America. It must not be forgotten that in Zurich Jung has been at work in psychology daringly saying that "God is a mere psychological

function of an irrational nature"; that Russian exiles from Tzardom have found an asylum and applied the 'dialectical method' to eliminate God as a fiction of the bourgeoisie, as Lenin said; that F. W. Foerster has there his educational work. All these diverse trains of thought make the intellectual atmosphere amidst which Brunner especially has to think and work, and when to this is added the radicalism of the neo-Kantian discipline at Marburg, the fearless criticism of the Scriptures in the same school, the relativism of Troeltsch who taught at Marburg, one sees that the Barthian group are up against the foremost problems of modern thought: this inevitably develops the critical attitude which marks all their thinking.

This criticism of current tendencies in theology provokes counter-criticism from the schools they assail. Until one has examined, and in some measure aligned, the various sections of the religious and theological world of thought, he cannot account for the warm welcome accorded to the Barthians. Nor can their distinctive doctrines be properly understood until one has some general idea of what their opponents stand for. Therefore, instead of proceeding at once to state the views of Barth and his colleagues, the next four chapters will be taken up with a general sketch of the Church position of Barth and friends as regards Lutheranism and Roman Catholicism, the philosophical position which they attack, the post-war social and ethical position to which they appeal, and the 'vacuum'

within the Churches, the remedy for which Barth seeks to find by a return to the theology of the Reformers, which, in his view, is also the return to the New Testament doctrine of the Word of God.

## CHAPTER II

### BARTH'S CHURCH POSITION

By position we do not mean the office that Barth occupies, but the particular church, the Reformed Church, of which he is a Professor, as it stands, in its specific doctrines, and in relation to the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches. Many English readers have found difficulty in reading the essay on "The Doctrinal Task of the Reformed Churches" (*WG.*, vii.), because its allusions to the position on the Continent were obscure to them. This arises partly from the decline of study of the Reformation history and theology in most of our colleges. One section of the Anglican Church actually repudiates the Reformation and prefers to take the Mediæval, or early Roman, Church as its pattern upon which to shape its practice and construe its doctrines. Even in Scotland, where Calvinistic tenets for long held sway, the trend has been away from Reformation studies toward those of Biblical criticism and psychology of religious experience. Only in so-called backward religious circles, Strict Baptists, Hyper-calvinists, 'Wee Frees,' is the theological terminology, which Barth uses, familiar. The celebration of the Quater-centenary of the

Reformation has directed attention again to the Reformers, and although the attentions of the German nation were concentrated inevitably upon the economic and social upheavals consequent upon the War, there has been issued a flood of books bearing upon the Reformation period. In Switzerland, a neutral country, but so near the contending armies that the effects were almost as bad as invasion itself, the doctrines of Zwingli and Calvin have taken the centre of the field. And the effect of the teaching of Barth and his friends is such that so competent an observer as Count Keyserling declares that they have 'saved' Protestantism in Germany.

Barth takes his stand upon the doctrines which are characteristic of the Church to which he belongs. In this chapter the general features of the Reformed Church will be sketched and their relation to the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches which surround them. It is important to bear in mind that the Reformed Church, as Barth says, is strong where the Rhine takes its rise amid the Alps, and where it falls into the sea in the Netherlands. But all the Protestant Churches on the Continent are feeling the impact of this teaching, and Dr Adolf Keller, who has recently been visiting the Evangelical Churches in Sweden, Finland, Esthonia, Latvia, and Poland, Churches chiefly of the Lutheran type, declares that they are all "undergoing a kind of revival, which may be due, not only to the hardship of the time but also to the deepening influence of

the theology of Karl Barth, which is sweeping all over the countries."

The Reformed Church was founded in Switzerland by Ulrich Zwingli, who was born 1st January 1484—seven weeks later than Luther—and died on the field of battle at Cappel in 1531. A humanist, he was a fierce foe of superstition and the deifying of the creature, and his reformation was directed with rare practical skill towards purifying the Church forms of worship, the establishment of ethical purity within the Church and State, and the removal of churchly intolerance. A radical, akin to the later English Puritans, he believed in democracy within the Church as against the clerical officials of Lutheranism and the hierarchy of the Roman Church. To his mind every believer had direct access to God without the intervention of priest or Church. He was more a man of head than of heart and feeling as Luther was, and his cool reasoning places him near to the rationalist. These personal qualities were stamped upon the Church which he founded. At the Colloquy at Marburg in 1529, Zwingli, with Œcolampadius, withstood Luther and Melanchthon as regards the meaning of the word 'is' in the phrase at the Lord's Supper, "This is my body," which Luther had chalked on the table. Zwingli held that 'is' means 'signifies, represents': Luther that 'is' meant 'is,' and that Christ was really present in the elements. Zwingli held the view that the Supper was a feast of commemoration, the bread and wine representing the body and blood as a

portrait represents a real person. At the end of the debate Luther refused Zwingli's proffered hand, saying, "Your spirit is not our spirit." Barth has shown in his penetrating study of the 'young Luther' (Essay II. in *TK.*, pp. 26-75) that in Luther's earlier writings his position was practically the same as Zwingli's. As Barth says, "Reformed doctrine will go the whole way with Luther . . . in order that when the *last* word falls, the Lutheran Yes is to be crossed, completed, and interpreted by the Reformed—not No but But, in the recollection that since this *last* word falls, the circle of that way is closed, the point reached from which Luther set out" (*Ibid.*, p. 74). And Barth suggests that the name of Calvin holds out the prospect and hope of a way out of the historical *impasse* which Luther made when he refused to confer further with Zwingli.

John Calvin, the completer of the Swiss Reformation and its greatest Biblical commentator and theologian, was born at Noyon in France in 1509. In 1536 he wrote in French his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, with its epistle dedicatory to the King of France, "one of the great epistles of the world," says Dr A. M. Fairbairn. In 1559 it assumed its final form, written in Latin. His first book, also dedicated to the King of France, was a commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia*, and reveals the humanist, the finished Latin scholar, a man ardent for moral conduct and truth, and a jurist. A 'sudden conversion,' which is not given in details, directed his thoughts to theology: persecution and even

imprisonment sharpened his zeal for reformation: through Farel of Bâsle he found his life work, and from 1541 to his death in 1564 he dwelt in, and ruled over, his adopted city Geneva. Calvin imbibed the humanism of Erasmus and the doctrine of grace of Luther: his chief doctrine was of the absolute sovereignty of God, who is absolute causality, distinct from all that is finite yet determining the finite, the infinitely majestic and holy God ruling over man, whose nature is utterly corrupt through sin. So corrupt that man can do nothing for his salvation but throw himself upon God's grace. Man had no merit and so no order of priests should come in, as in Romanism, to mediate salvation to men. God rules through His word: the 'ministry of the Word' was the chief service man could render God and his fellows, and so Calvin instituted the order of ministers, trained to understand and expound God's Word.

Barth has caught all the passion of Calvin for a trained ministry, and something of his method as an expositor of Biblical truth. It is to Zwingli and Calvin that he recurs for Reformed doctrine, chiefly on the Word and Divine sovereignty, and to Luther for his exposition of faith. The later Reformed theologians are seldom referred to: in the *Dg.*, Beza is not cited, Bullinger and Coccejus but once, Polanus thrice, and Keckermann (1571-1609) seven times. The friendly relations which existed between Calvin and the German Reformers—Philip Schaff says, "Calvin was cosmopolitan in spirit, acting as a connecting

link between the German and the Latin race"—exist happily between Barth and the most evangelical of Germans to-day. And the thesis of Brunner's work, *TC.*, is a happy blend of Calvinistic and Lutheran *clichés : sola gratia, sola fide, soli Deo gloria :* by grace alone, by faith alone, to God's sole glory.

Lutheran theologians frequently comment on the small place assigned to Confessions and Articles of Faith in the Reformed Church. This Church is not without them : the three Helvetic Confessions, produced when Rome was undergoing the Counter-Reformation, have their place, and the Westminster Confession attests that this Church in Britain has made its contribution to confessional literature. Perhaps the most spiritual in tone, the first to be issued in German, is the Heidelberg Catechism. This had a gracious influence in softening the asperity between the German and Swiss branches of the Reformation. Barth has something to say on this lack of credal formularies. "In the truest sense there is no such thing as Reformed doctrine, except the appeal to the open Bible and the Spirit which from it speaks to the spirit. Our fathers had good reason for leaving us *no* Augsburg Confession, authentically interpreting the Word of God, *no* Formula of Concord, *no* 'Symbolic Books' which might later, like the Lutheran, come to possess an odour of sanctity. They left us only creeds, more than one of which begin and end with a *proviso* which leaves them open to being improved upon in the future" (*WG.*, Eng.

trans., p. 229). In proof of the latter statement he cites the Introduction to the Berne Synod (1532): "Where anything shall be brought to us by our pastors or others that brings us nearer to Christ and, according to God's Word, is more profitable to common friendship and Christian love than the present recorded opinion, we will readily accept the same and not thwart the Holy Spirit in His course" (*TK.*, p. 80).

The Reformed Church agrees with the Lutheran that the formal principle of the Reformation is the Word of God. That thesis is expressly stated in the Title of the Church, "reformed according to the Word of God." The First Thesis of the Berne Synod alluded to above also expresses what is excluded, as well as what it includes. "The holy Christian Church, whose only Head is Christ, is born of the Word of God, abides in it, nor hears the voice of the stranger." Calvin thus expressed the all-regulating place os the Word when he wrote: "We do not seek God anywhere else than *in* His Word, we do not think of Him save *with* His Word, we speak nothing of Him save *through* His Word" (*gegen Caroli*, Op. 7, 311). It is on those *dicta* that Barth takes his stand with his central doctrine of the Word of God. As he says: "The Reformed Churches saw that truth is contained only in the Word of God, that the Word of God for them lay only in the Old and New Testaments, and that every doctrine must be, therefore, measured against the unchangeable and impassable standard discoverable in the Scriptures" (*WG.*, Eng. trans.,

p. 240 f.). It is important, if we would grasp Barth's attitude towards modern tendencies, to note what this principle excludes. Against the Roman Catholic who places as second, alongside of Scripture, the Apostolic tradition, and thirdly, the teaching office of the Holy See, this principle drives a great cleavage. Barth uses it also against "the covert apotheosis of history which is as significant for the positive new Lutheran as for the 'liberal' Christian" (*TK.*, p. 77). His further teaching as the threefold expression of that Word, from God, through prophets and apostles, and through the preaching office, we must leave for further consideration (cap. xiv.).

It is not necessary for the purpose of this book to deal with the two other leading differences between the Reformed and Lutheran Churches—the Lord's Supper has been touched upon—viz.: the Christological controversy on the two natures in Jesus Christ and the priority of grace over sovereignty in the doctrine of election. It may save space to present a summary of the distinctions between the two Churches, as given by C. Beck in 1864 (*Christliche Dogmengeschichte*, *2te Aufl.*, p. 28 f.): "The Lutheran hold more by the Grace, the Reformed by the Word of God; that seeks faith, this obedience. The former is more bent on the doctrinal, the latter on the practical. That considers rather the Gospel as gospel than this as law; renewal of faith marks the Lutheran, reformation of life and morals the Reformed. Consequently the former presses more for the material unity of dogma for one Church:

the Reformed more for the formal liberty of the individual's movement in life. That is conservative, this radical; one wants nothing against the Scripture, the other takes all from the Scripture. Lutheran is symbolizing, Reformed organizing. Faith has disappeared in the material principle, finite and infinite are one; over against the formal principle (faith) it stands outwardly separated—the infinite and the finite are separate, but this finite is absolutely determined by the infinite. Hence the Reformed Church protests against all paganism and the deification of the creature, as *e.g.*, the elements in the Sacrament. Lutheran inveighs against the righteousness of works and thinks the Reformed inclined to self-righteousness. In the Lutheran system there is a real immanence of the divine in human nature: in the Reformed there is the determining transcendence of the Divine in relation to human nature. Hence the one thinks of a real, present working, the other of a virtual, transcendent working. Lutheran holds to a mystical supernaturalism, Reformed to an idealistic determinism, and so the former has a propensity to dissolve the human in God, whilst the latter inclines to separate the Divine dualistically from the human. Indwelling grace is the Lutheran delight, its in-working the Reformed Churchman's."

From that summary it will be seen that Barth, by his position, is true to type, and the clear lines are sketched where the Barthian School and their opponents are ranged.

As regards the Roman Catholic system Barth

remains true, in essentials, to the positions taken up by Zwingli and Calvin. It is true that Professor Wobbermin has lately[1] raised the question whether Barth has not gone some way towards the Roman position by his emphasis, in the *Rom.* and earlier essays, on faith as sheer vacuity (*hohlraum*), which is not far from the Roman doctrine of *fides implicita*, that is, that man's soul is an empty space ready to receive whatever the Church may decide to teach. At first sight there seems some substance in Wobbermin's charge, but it is to be remarked that in Barth's more cautious writing since he became a Professor he has dropped the phrase almost completely, as well as the other phrase, taken from Kierkegaard, of God as "the absolutely Other"—a phrase which received fresh currency when adopted by Rudolf Otto in *Das Heilige*. Barth's general attitude towards the Roman system can best be seen in his essays on "Church and Theology" and "Roman Catholicism as Question for the Protestant Church" (*vide* vol. *TK.*, x. and xi.).

The general features of Roman Catholicism hardly need to be described to assist us in defining the attitude of the Reformed Church thereto. The Roman claim in the famous adjectives, one, holy, catholic, apostolic, is familiar to any reader of this book, and the cardinal difference between the Reformation Churches and the Roman is found where they deal with the appropriation of salvation. The claim of Rome to be the representative of Jesus Christ on earth, the one channel

[1] *Rechtlinien Evangelischer Theologie*, p. 110. Vandanhoeck, Goettingen.

through which the blessings of salvation are conveyed to men, and that channel the sacramental system: the exaltation of the teaching office of the Holy See into the place of Christ the Prophet, of the officiating priest at the Mass perpetuating the priestly work of Christ into an indispensable factor for the conveyance of saving grace, the claim of the Papacy to be Christ's Vicar in the discharge of His kingly office upon earth—all these points are combated by the Reformed Church. Barth is true to his church traditions in his polemic against Roman Catholicism. There may be resemblances between his view of supernatural grace and the Roman view; these have been welcomed by Roman writers; the Calvinistic claim that the Church is separate from, and ought never to be subordinate to, any other society, be it the State, the nationality, the class, is also common in Romanism; and at times the claim made by Barth for obedience to the Church seems to come very near to the similar claim of Rome for absolute subjection, yet with Barth there is always the insistence on the absolute sovereignty of God, the nullity of man, and that the one channel by which grace is conveyed to men is the Word of God.

There is a brilliant address of Barth's given in his volume, *TK.*, under the heading, "The Idea of the Church," when he addressed a Catholic audience at Muenster in July 1927. There he argues that both Romans and Reformed see the same reality in the Church, and he takes up, one by one, the adjectives, one, holy, catholic,

apostolic, to show what is common to both. Church, *ecclesia*, denotes 'a calling out' or 'in' of the people of God on the ground of the covenant between God and men made through Jesus Christ—a people of faith awakened by the Holy Ghost. The article on the Church in the Heidelberg Catechism is placed alongside of that in the Roman Catechism and shown to be, in all essentials, practically the same. Both have the clause, "through faith." The Church is *one*, whether visible or invisible, "they are not two species of one genus": in need of salvation both Churches are practically agreed. This is substantiated by parallels drawn from Irenæus, Cyprian, Augustine, Luther, and Calvin. The Church is *holy*, "as to its origin and destiny as the place and medium of the divine working of revelation and reconciliation,separated from every other institution and society." Here the Roman Catechism and Calvin's *Institutes* are placed side by side at the relative place where each deals with the question, how far is the Church holy? Barth even goes so far as to say that "in the foundation of faith" the Church as a whole cannot err, in the sense that it cannot fail of its purpose and is sure of perpetuity of existence. On the adjective *catholic* he says, "We seem to be one in this, that the adjective is to be understood not mechanically-quantitatively . . . as measured by numbers, but spiritually-qualitatively, grounded in the essential supremacy of truth." "Catholicism means virtual universality, not numerical moreness." On *apostolic*, Barth says both are

agreed as to the apostolicity of the origin of teaching and the succession of the Church: "even the Catholic must admit that Protestantism knows both an authority of God and of the Church so far as it is founded on that regulative witness of the Apostle for the understanding and for the preaching of the divine revelation," and on the other hand Protestantism admits the relative, delegated authority to Peter, in Matthew xvi., but understood as under the authority of the written and preached words of the Bible. Then on the opening word of all Creeds, *credo*, Barth puts all his Protestant force: "That the Church is God's must be believed, and it becomes and is perceptible as God's Church only through grace." He cites the Roman Catechism (I., 10, 17, 18), "We know not by human reason but we perceive by the eyes of faith . . . *only by faith* do we *understand* the keys of heaven to be in the Church" (the italics are Barth's).

Barth then proceeds to show that though there is broad and common ground, the ways diverge at the manner of interpreting the three words, *fide solum intelligimus* (we understand by faith alone). "If we were one as to the meaning of these three words, there would be no splitting of the Church and only the adjective 'Christian' and not 'catholic' or 'evangelical' would be required. If a Protestant thinks these three words catholically, then is he at bottom catholic, though he be (like Barth) a Protestant Professor of theology, and if a Catholic understands these words in Protestant fashion, then in his heart

he has become protestant" (*TK.*, p. 294). The rest of the address explains that Protestant interpretation of 'faith,' and rings the changes again on the words, one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. It will be seen that Barth, whilst displaying an eirenic spirit, abated not a whit the fundamental view of the Reformed Church as to grace, faith, the Word and the Spirit as constituting the true Church.

In an address delivered to the Preachers' Conference of the Lower Rhine area, at Duesseldorf in April 1928, Barth took as his theme, "Roman Catholicism as Question for the Protestant Church" (*TK.*, pp. 329-359). In this address nearly every point raised on both sides, Catholic and Protestant, is dealt with, and establishes incontestably the right of the speaker to be called a doughty champion of Protestantism. In a searching analysis of the charges brought by Catholics against what Barth calls the newer Protestantism, he makes a startling admission. "If I came to-day to the conviction that the interpretation of the Reformation on the line of Schleiermacher-Ritschl-Troeltsch (or also Seeberg, or also Holl) is correct, that Luther and Calvin should have meant it so with their undertaking, to-morrow I would not indeed become a Catholic, but I would take my departure from the so-called Evangelical Church, and if set to choose between the two evils, I would in fact sooner become a Catholic" (p. 339, note 3).

In that vigorous statement one sees at a glance that he is very ill at ease with present-day Protestantism, and feels justified in appealing to the

older Reformers. In the same speech he roundly says, "The newer Protestantism has lost the 'substance' of a church: it has surrendered its 'renewal' (as at the Reformation): it has ceased to be churchly and protestant: churchly in its rationalistic form, protestant in Pietism," with which elsewhere he brackets Methodism (p. 350). Such outspokenness explains the attacks made upon him. But of his Protestantism there can be no question. The Roman criticisms, whether the Protestant Church is, and how far, a Church, whether it is indeed a *Protestant* Church, are answered in detail, with many a *tu quoque*. On the first charge he replies that the Reformation was a restoration, and not a destroying, of the Church: "Reformation is not revolution": "Protestantism protested not against but for the Church, and as a *Church* is not only not less or weaker but even more and stronger than the Roman Church" (p. 336). With great skill Barth draws upon passages from Thomas Aquinas' hymns, the Massbook, the *De Imitatione Christi*, where man is put in the subordinate place and 'God alone' is exalted 'in His own House.' On the second charge he admits that Protestants of late have lost the old accent and emphasis (here occurs the passage just quoted), but points out that the Old Reformation Church was re-established as "the Church of the Word, which is the revelation and self-impartation of Another, a Person confronting us, and when this Person is the Person of God, the Word is the expression of His sovereignty—not of His might, but of

His sovereignty over us. And if God confronts me in His word, that means that He rules me through His command and through His promise, and that I have to believe Him and obey Him" (p. 350 f.). Here we catch the bugle-note of Barth's music. He proceeds to cite representative Roman theologians, who talk of 'supernature,' of 'life streaming through the sacraments,' and says, "Where the concepts, Life, *Eros*, Being, Nature (even if it is 'super'-nature, divine nature) dominate, there dominates a Neuter," and not a Person, such as meets us in his word. But further, "That Word of God which meets me is God's judgment: it is God the Lord and man is His slave, in the core of his being a disloyal slave." "The Reformation is the re-establishment of the Church as a sinful Church, or rather a Church of sinners." He laments the decay of the sense of sin, both in the Roman and Protestant Churches, says with shame that Dostoiewski, the Russian, has to teach the Churches again what sin means, and then deals with his final point, that the Word of the personal God is a word of grace. "The Reformation was the re-establishment of the Church as the Church of the pity of God" (p. 358). He winds up with the boast of a young Catholic tutor at Muenster that Protestantism has only another fifty years of life, to which he replies, "He may be mistaken: the confusion of man and *the providence of God* will still hold," but that it is time for the Protestant Church to meet the questions put from Rome against it, and be done with the modern phil-

osophy, mysticism, and relativism which, in Barth's opinion, explain the present weakness of modern Protestantism.

There is no rancour in Dr Barth's comment on the Roman Church. In his *Dg.* he quotes with delight from Anselm, Bonaventura, and Thomas Aquinas. Even when the Mass is under discussion, there is a tender tone in his voice. "We do not wish," he said to a ministers' meeting, "to cast a shadow on the Gospel content and effect of the Catholic altar sacrament by suggesting that *we* possibly have something better. . . . To-day we are apparently preparing to turn the clock back a bit—to the days before the Reformation at least (a hint at Heiler's 'High-church' tendencies). We refrain from quoting Question 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism, which dubs the papal mass a 'denial of the one sacrifice and passion of Jesus Christ and a cursed remnant of idolatry.'" And in the same address he declared "I hold that it must be fundamentally possible in the long last to come to an agreement in thought with a Catholic theologian, and even over the subject of the altar sacrament, without any accompanying desire to take it from him" (*WG.*, pp. 114, 133).

Enough has been said now concerning the Church position of the Reformed Church and Barth's faithfulness to it. We must now pass to the philosophical situation against which he directs his attack.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BARTHIAN ATTACK ON PHILOSOPHY

THE return to the dualistic view of man's relation to God, as given in the Bible and in the doctrines of the Reformers, requires the abandonment of most of the philosophical positions assumed during the past two centuries. Barth is always the theologian criticizing the philosophers and the theologians who allow their teaching to be determined by philosophical notions. The philosophical criticism of philosophical theologians, like Schleiermacher, is carried through by Brunner more than by Barth. It is difficult to extract from Barth's writings a definite scheme of philosophy or canons of criticism; these are to be read between the lines as he discusses Schleiermacher, the sceptic Overbeck, and the avowed nihilist in theology, Feuerbach (Essays I., IV., V., VI., in *TK.*). Therefore use will be made of Brunner's works in this chapter.

Barth recognizes quite well that no man's mind comes as a *tabula rasa* to the study of Scripture. "No historian," he says, "is simply an observer. . . . Over the matter observed there hovers, like a doubled rainbow, a second image, viz.: the thought of the observer, unavoidably accom-

panying the object. The observer is not in the position to offer the sacrifice of the intellect as little as he can jump away from his own shadow. When he understands the text objectively he cannot be other than subjectively alongside of the text; when he lets it speak he cannot do other than speak himself. As he looks through what is in the text, or does not look, he cannot do otherwise but reveal, step by step, that he approaches it, whether consciously or unconsciously, as an educated man or a rustic, from a definite theory of knowledge, a definite logic and ethics, definite life-ideals, in short—a definite philosophy; some kind of a philosophy, though it be altogether primitive, popular, aphoristic, eclectic." Barth gives as instances A. Ritschl and J. T. Beck: the former boasting that he read the New Testament without tinge of Greek metaphysics, the latter revealing that he was a disciple of Schelling and Baader, and also of Jacob Boehme the mystic. "He betrays himself as a naïve Aristotelian by his comfortably-pragmatic references, or as a camp-follower of Kant by his antipathy to metaphysics and his inclination to discover, above everything, ethics." "Luther and Calvin had their philosophy, also, and if we see rightly, Luther more of a neo-, and Calvin more of an old-Platonist, and Zwingli, more modern than both, had not been Zwingli without the renascence-pantheism of Picus of Mirandola. The latest New Testament student may not and will not deny that he enters the schools with (the theory) of Phenomenology, nor will we deny that

Kierkegaard's anti-Hegelianism is also a philosophy, and when he recognizes in Idealism 'the old, bad foe,' instead of reaching for the key to the mystery of the Old and New Testament in the 'real dialectic of the Thou and I' . . . then one is in the ranks of those who 'explain' the Bible, reading it through the spectacles of a 'world-view'" (*Dg.*, I., p. 403 f.).

Barth reveals his own 'glasses' in that description. He, too, leans on Plato and Kant, to him Schelling and Boehme are an aversion; the latest school of philosophy in Germany, Phenomenalism, which has swept through the colleges with the same force as Barth's theology, has supplied him with tools, and is present to his mind when Schleiermacher and Schelling are the persons whose teachings are discussed. Barth is something of a neo-Kantian who tries to stem the new doctrines of Husserl and Heidegger. It is a misfortune for the average reader that he knows little of the new doctrines: this makes it so difficult to interpret Barth's terminology drawn from the 'bracketing' system of Husserl.[1] The central point of Husserl's method is that by psychological introspection what was an object outside of one's self, *i.e.*, a transcendent object, becomes an object within consciousness, an 'immanent' object. When Barth uses Husserl's method, as *e.g.*, in the first forty-seven pages of the *Dg.*, he keeps scrupulously to the method, but when he has to pass from considering the abstract

[1] Husserl has an article on his doctrines in the new *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Phenomenology."

themes, Christian discourse and preaching to the preacher and hearer, that method fails : they are not within any man's consciousness as 'immanent' objects : the former attitude was one of the spectator impartially contemplating the objects, now he himself is drawn into the matter as a person, and when the speech is God's word addressed to him, the positions are reversed and the subject considering becomes the object. In Barth's words, " we pass from phenomenological thinking to ' existential,' yea, ethical thinking " (*Dg.*, p. 49). This is his ' viewpoint ' from which he surveys all post-Kantian philosophy, and its implications confirm him in his theological doctrines. Philosophy is to be subordinate to theology, or rather, to God who speaks through the Word. The ground of his complaint against present-day theology is that it has allowed philosophy to usurp the place of what has been revealed in Scripture, and that in philosophy we hear the voice of man and not the voice of God.

The Barthian School is not content to denounce the philosophy of idealism : it proceeds to show where it is defective from the Christian point of view. It borrows the methods of the philosophers and turns their tools upon their authors. Thus, as with Husserl just mentioned, one can see at once why the theological students in Germany throng to Brunner's classroom in great numbers in order to be equipped for their task of meeting the philosophy of the day on its own ground. Similarly, as we shall see (*vide* cap. xiii.), the dialectic method so prominent in Hegel—itself a

favourite method in the Scholastics derived from Averroism, as it in turn goes back to Socrates—is presented with its *Either—Or*, without the synthesis of Hegel, to develop the doctrine of 'Crisis' so typical of this school. And the Kantian criticism of all dogmatism, philosophical, scientific, or rationalistic, is brought into service to place a man in front of his God 'without excuse.'

The kind of person to whom Barth and Brunner speak is the university student or the pastor who has been trained in the methods of study as practised at a university. They presuppose that their readers know the various theories of knowledge which emerge in the study of philosophy, and for the untrained mind this presupposition makes it difficult to understand their allusions. As this book is intended for the general public, something must be said about the course of philosophical thought since Descartes, to enable the reader to come in touch with the Barthian criticism of philosophy.

The first to give the modern outlook is Descartes (1596-1650), who started from a position of doubting everything. "There is nothing," he said, "which is not still in dispute within the sphere of philosophy, and therefore nothing which is above doubt" (*On Method*). But of one thing he could not doubt, viz., that he doubted, that is, was thinking, and so he came to his first undoubted fact, "I think, therefore I am." From that position he advanced to question the reality of the outward world of things, and reached the dualism of mind and matter. Since that time the

question of the relation of mind and matter and the content of the thinking mind have been ever the theme of speculation. Barth never mentions Descartes without showing spleen, for he regards him as the fountain-head of the current of thought which has made man the centre of interest and displaced God from his due place in human thinking. The Scotsman, David Hume (1711-1776), came to the sceptical position that we never really know the world of outward things, all we have is a bundle of impressions and our ideas are simply copies, faint reproductions of our impressions. "Impressions may be divided into two kinds—those of sensation and those of reflection. The first kind arises in the soul from unknown causes; the second is derived in great measure from our ideas" (*Treatise on Human Nature*, Part I., sec. iii.). This raised two questions: Is all our knowledge the product of impressions conveyed through our senses? What is the self which persists through all the flow of sensations? To answer these questions Kant (1724-1804) turned his attention to examine the mind in its acts of thought. Two factors enter into the process of knowledge, the senses and understanding. Objects are *given* to the senses from without, understanding *thinks* them out. Thinking is comparing, combining, judging, and from those actions Kant proceeds to analyse the faculties of the mind. The mind is not passive, as in Hume's theory, and Kant establishes that there are forms of thought in the mind itself prior to sensation: such forms as space and

time, and all knowledge of objects is bound up with the conditions of space and time. We can only know the forms of thought through which our sensations are shaped, never the 'thing in itself.' This combining, judging mind carries within it its past experience, and this constitutes the abiding self amid the passing stream of impressions which are produced in sensation. In this way Kant answered the questions set by Hume. But then the question arises, Can we ever get beyond the material world to a world of spirit? Kant would say no, so far as the theoretical reason is concerned; but yes, so far as the practical reason is brought under inspection. For man has to act: he asks how? and forms judgments of praise and blame upon himself: he feels he *must*, and *ought* to, act in certain ways; he does not make the standard of judgment, it stands over him as an imperative—the categorical imperative as Kant calls it. He feels free to obey or disobey, to submit to the law felt to be absolute authority over him. And religiously, this is felt to be God. By the pure reason the existence of God cannot be proved: by the practical reason man feels himself called in question and adjudged. Following Kant, the idealistic school of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel sought to pass from the world of time and space to the world beyond, the transcendent world (German, *Jenseits*). These thinkers start from the position that the individual consciousness is part of the universal consciousness which is at the back of the universe, and which makes the objective world knowable

to the human mind. If they succeed in their attempt, then religion is one of the universal ideas common to all human minds. God would then be an object within human consciousness. But Kant's criticism of the pure reason had made that untenable. Therefore Schleiermacher sought to find God, not in the reasoning faculty, but in "the feeling of absolute dependence" man has when religious. From this necessarily compressed analysis of the course of modern thought we gain the position at which Barth and Brunner begin their attack on the idealistic philosophy.

The attack centres upon Schleiermacher (1768-1835). Barth, as we have said above, deals with him in several essays. Brunner's book, *MW.*, is completely devoted to a minute examination of the leading ideas and their development in the formal books of Schleiermacher, the *Reden* (1799 ed.), the *Monologues* (1800), the *Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums* (Eng. tr. Farrar, *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*, T. & T. Clark, 1850), and *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsaetzen der evangelische Kirche* (1821, later ed. altered; The Christian Faith according to the Principles of the Evangelical Church). Brunner does not draw upon the seven volumes of Sermons, as Barth does, for materials, but makes use of the *Letters* of Schleiermacher to his friend Luecke. The personal character of Schleiermacher is not assailed: it is beyond reproach. His doctrines alone are examined, and the claim in the great work, *The Christian Faith*, to be an exposition of evangelical principles is minutely criticized and

refuted. Brunner takes up this thinker and preacher because "he is the only really great theologian of the past century, the root from which as a shoot the 'Christian mysticism' of modern theology grows." "The most significant thing about his service," says Brunner, "is that he combines the idealism and humanism which has been active in the theology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (*MW.*, pp. 6, 8). During the past twenty years this writer has been much belauded during the centenary celebrations of his chief works, and E. Troeltsch, one of his great followers, wrote that "Schleiermacher's programme remains the great programme of all scientific theology and only needs working out, not the substitution of new methods." For that reason also Barth and Brunner feel called upon, as professors training theological students, to explode the notion that Schleiermacher truly represents the faith of the New Testament and the Reformers. Brunner states the thesis of his attack thus: "The connexion of the philosophy of immanence, *i.e.*, mysticism, and Christian belief runs out into a colossal self-deception, since thereby there is intruded into the evangelical faith an interpretation of the whole life which stands in sharpest opposition to that faith. This philosophy is almost identical in measure with the fundamental truths of the Gospel, because the Saviour is a 'genius,' a prophet, and the Kingdom of God, for which the Apostles and the Reformers looked, is human culture" (*op. cit.*, p. 11).

In that thesis the twin themes, the philosophy

of immanence and human culture, are extracted from Schleiermacher's works and put alongside of the Reformers' Christian doctrines. The standard of comparison, the Christian doctrines, we lay aside in order to gain a clear view of the philosophical position which Brunner assails. He has put that briefly in these words: "The kernel of religion according to Schleiermacher, is immediate consciousness, experience, feeling, not thought, creative originality. The question, What is true? is only to be answered by the other question, What is experienced? This romantic subjectivism, to which the 'How' is much weightier than the 'What,' is what makes the question as to the nature of the religious consciousness the fundamental question of theology; it makes faith out to be 'irrational experience,' revelation into 'the originality of religious genius,' and pushes aside the word of faith itself in the bare reflection upon faith" (*op. cit.*, p. 11). In those words all the current discussions about psychology of religion, the validity of Christian experience, are touched upon, from the viewpoint of the philosophical ground from which they spring. The problem of the theory of religious knowledge, the place of feeling within religious apprehension of God, the philosophy of history, these are also involved in this discussion.

It should be premised that Schleiermacher himself, in the beginning of his first edition of the *Christian Faith*, thought he was excluding philosophy from his work. "That a combination of philosophical and dogmatic material is illegitimate,

is a fundamental idea of this work," were his own words. What he meant by philosophical material is presented in Sec. 3 of the third edition: "Piety is, considered purely for itself, neither a knowing nor a doing, but a determination of the feeling, or of the immediate self-consciousness." In the 'knowing' he sought to exclude the egoism-doctrine of Fichte, who held that man finds himself by the 'shock' of meeting a non-ego in the world without, and also the identity-philosophy of Schelling, who held that the world without, "nature, is the soul made visible and the soul is the invisible nature and in the absolute identity of the soul *within* man and of the nature *without* man," man reaches the Absolute. Schleiermacher sought, too, to get round the block left by Kant, who held that we can never, by pure thought, get out of the sphere of time and space. The other thing excluded by Schleiermacher, 'doing,' is also directed against Kant's view of religion as confined to simply 'doing our duty,' moralism. In 'feeling,' therefore, was thought to be the 'place' where religion was to be sought. The 'doing' served also to exclude, so Schleiermacher thought, Fichte's view of nature as a Moral Ordering, 'the *place* of religious faith'[1] to which man attains by moral effort.

Schleiermacher's definitions of feeling, as seat of religion, should here be given in order to grasp Brunner's criticism.

[1] Here is the origin of the term 'place' which is so prominent in Barth's and Brunner's works.

"The essence of religion (*Frömmigkeit*) is that we are conscious of ourselves as absolutely dependent—*i.e.*, as dependent on God."

"To seek and find the Infinite and Eternal in all that lives and moves, in all growth and change, in all action and suffering, and only to possess and to know life itself by immediate feeling in relation to this Being—that is religion. To find the Infinite is to satisfy the longing soul" (ed. 1821, p. 9; *Reden*, 1st ed., p. 43).

The microscopic scrutiny of Schleiermacher's works by Brunner is directed to show that, instead of eschewing philosophy, the philosophies of Spinoza, of Fichte, and Schelling are incorporated in the texture of Schleiermacher's thinking and are incompatible with the Christian faith as taught by the Reformers. Brunner's main points are (*a*) that the universe takes the place of God, though the latter name is used; (*b*) that God's relation to the world is left indefinitely suspended between identity with the universe and the unity lying behind it; (*c*) that man's relation to God is described as union, flying-together-into-one-another, mutual penetration; (*d*) that there is confusion of thought in the description of feeling, now it is pure passivity, and then it is an activity, although elsewhere it is said to be feeling alone, without knowing or doing; (*e*) feeling is near akin to the later notion of 'the sub-conscious self'; (*f*) the measure of religion as feeling is simply intensity of experience. As 'being determined' from without, the man becomes a thing acted upon by forces, and

personality is not allowed for; as 'feeling for the universe,' there is no religious content in the experience. If it is purely passive, where can come the reaction to impressions which make consciousness? The resemblance to Schelling's identity-philosophy comes out in the phrase, "the feeling of absolute dependence on God and the consciousness of one's relatedness to God are one and the same thing: the consciousness of God is so included in the self-consciousness (of man) that they are inseparable" (*Christian Faith*, 3 Auf., Sec. 4, 4). The Fichtean Ego, 'the productive fantasy,' emerges in Schleiermacher's scheme when (*ibid.*, Sec. 70) he speaks "of the pious moving as ever only in the combination of that feeling with a sentient and real self-consciousness, and the thing sensed must be seen as an infinite manifold." Here the passive feeling suddenly acquires activity. But enough of this. There is no question more debated in Germany to-day than the precise denotation that Schleiermacher intended to give under the word 'feeling.' The late Baron von Huegel accurately summed up by saying: "The determinations concerning God can readily be traced back to Spinoza. God is just the unity of the multiplicity which appears as world; everything is and becomes entirely through its natural connexion (since each thing consists through everything), and everything is and becomes entirely through the Divine Omnipotence (since everything consists undividedly through the One); and all distinctions, attributes, and actions of God are only such in our human

consciousness of God and have no foundation in the Divine Being itself" (*Eternal Life*, p. 197). Here the Roman Catholic and the Reformed Church Professor are at one. No wonder Brunner and Barth attack the intrusion of philosophy into theology when it issues in such a confusion.

Brunner traces this philosophy of immanence back to the Humanism of the Renascence, which, he says, " was a turning from the Christian understanding of life to ancient thinking and ideals. This created the mentality of the Enlightenment period ; in France it issued in the Revolution ; in Germany it issued in idealism, in philosophy and romanticism in literature, and ran out into the swamp of modern 'liberal' theology." "The heart of the philosophical idealism assumes that man in his inmost depths of being is divine—divine in this respect that the consciousness of the highest and best in human nature constitutes also the consciousness of the eternally divine. The point of view is continuity from man to God, a monism." It is because philosophy has issued thus that they plead for a return to the Biblical doctrine of the Reformers. But before dispensing with idealistic philosophy they have examined it and tested it and seen their way through it. To that philosophy they attribute the modern decline of the sense of sin : the assertion of freedom in wilful, law-declining forms : the shallowness of thought concerning God, duty, and immortality.

It would be a mistake to think that Brunner

and Barth fight against all philosophy. As the passage at the opening of this chapter shows, Barth admits that every leader of thought has some definite philosophy. Both his and Brunner's are based chiefly upon Kant. Brunner, in the Preface to *MW.*, admits that many critics say that he needs the Kantian philosophy for the upholding or foundation of his own theological outlook. He goes on to say frankly that he regards the *Critiques* of Kant as standing nearest, in their basal tendency, to the Christian faith, though, he adds, it is not a perfect attempt at a truly critical philosophy. He further urges the Christian Churches, so far as they can live within the rational culture, not to abandon philosophy, but to attempt to occupy themselves with a really critical philosophy. "For both Christians and those whose reason is concerned for the Word of God," he says, "the self-scrutiny of reason as to its faculties and the limits set to them, therefore the criticism of every philosophical system-building, remains a necessity." One secret of their great following in the Colleges is this rigorous scrutiny of current vogues of sentiment and thought: it is a tribute to a generation which is called from pleasure-making by the social, moral, and political conditions which prevail everywhere on the Continent, and which is making so widespread a response. A short survey of these social conditions will prepare us for understanding also the ethical and religious appeal of the men round Barth.

## CHAPTER IV

### BARTH'S APPEAL TO THE POST-WAR CONDITIONS

THE message of Barth and his friends met with a response which came as a surprise to them and which revealed its fitness to be 'the word for the hour.' It is often stated by those who are not friendly towards the new movement of thought that this way of thinking was a mere 'flash in the pan,' befitting the pessimistic mood which followed upon Germany's reverse in the war. Certainly the appearance of the *Rom.* in 'the apocalyptic date, 1918,' as Barth describes that year, was epoch-making by its illustrations of Pauline doctrines of sin and man's need of redemption drawn from the lurid experience of war. The post-war situation has but confirmed Barth's diagnosis of the 'radical badness' of human nature which Kant affirmed over a century ago. To the mood of resentment at national defeat succeeded a rigorous criticism of the ineptitude of the autocratic machine which had brought such disaster to the nation, and the 'radical criticism' of Barth matched the mood which prevails all over the Continent and even the whole world.

Barth has expressed his surprise in the Preface to his *Dg.* As he looks back on the way he

has taken he says he seems like one groping his way up the dark stairs of a church tower, who grips hold of what he thought was a guiding rope, but which turned out to be a bell-pull. The clang of the big bell thus unwittingly tolled startled him as much as it surprised those who heard its din. He had not intended it, and cannot and does not wish to repeat it. That admission is made to justify his changed mode of writing and the scholastic method of his presentation of his ideas now that he has become a Professor. "I do not think that I am either directed or obliged to continue in the garb of a prophet!"

A survey of the 'present discontents' in Germany and elsewhere makes it plain that this message comes at the psychological moment. The social situation may be summed up in the one word, Socialism: the ethical situation in the phrase, The Youth Movement. Obviously it is difficult to measure the volume and force of the stream of socialistic forces which now rule in Republican Germany and in the Netherlands. "We see dimly in the present what is small and what is great." But the great service rendered by Barth has been to show that the evils of the present time are to be traced to the departure from the idea of God and His relation to man, as given by the Reformers. His criticism of socialism links on to the attack on the idealistic philosophy which we discussed in the preceding chapter. Barth presents a position which supplies a criterion of the course of thought during the

"most fatal century," as he calls it, since Schleiermacher introduced philosophical concepts into theology.

It must ever be borne in mind that Barth, Gogarten, and Thurneysen come to their criticism of current socialism direct from their work as pastors dealing with their flocks. The task of the ministry all over the world has been and is hard, but nowhere harder than in the Rhine valley and the industrial areas of Westphalia where Barth's work has lain. For the masses have there been thoroughly soaked with socialistic ideas which are, as elsewhere on the Continent, mainly anti-religious if not atheistic. The great obstacle to religious work, as the Jerusalem Conference Report declared, is 'secularism'; the materialistic mind absorbed in the problems of this world until the thought of God and the world beyond has faded from the mind.

For over a generation at least this has been most marked in Germany. Eucken as long ago as 1895 described this mental climate in his book, whose title may be rendered, *The Fight for a Spiritual Life-Content*. In 1910 he wrote an essay, "Against Pessimism," in which he said that "the nineteenth century saw a great movement away from the invisible world of religious faith, philosophic thought, and artistic creation, and towards the things of the visible world; a movement bringing with it the victory of realism over idealism. . . . The powers which the modern life-impulse called into being have, to a great extent, separated themselves from our

control, have come to dominate us: now a soulless mechanism and now wild human passion endangers the rationality of life and poisons its joy. . . . We are painfully conscious of an inner weakness, and life, thus uncontrolled, becomes vacillating and insecure" (*Collected Essays*, Eng. trans., p. 170f.). The same conclusion was reached by Baron von Huegel when he tried to estimate "The German Soul." "It is materialism that appears interiorly to have sapped, or utterly swept away by far the greater part of idealism—and deflected and changed the German soul" (p. 179).

At the very time that von Huegel was penning that verdict Barth was thundering in prophetic tones the thoughts which later he put into his *Romans*. In 1916 at Aarau he was declaring that we have before us the fiendishness of business competition and the world war, passion and wrongdoing, antagonism between classes and moral depravity within them, economic tyranny above and the slave spirit below. Six years later, when he spoke on "The Problem of Ethics To-day," he drew the contrast between the pre-war situation and the post-war one. "When the Negro is on the Rhine and Lenin on the throne of the Czar, and when the dollar stands at over two thousand marks, it needs no words from me to prove that the question as to what we ought to do comes to us with something more of gravity than it did at the beginning of the century, when the brilliant and confident age of the Hohenzollerns was at its height" (*WG.*,

p. 144). "The ways of European man are now proved impossible in relation to the *ethic* of Christianity," he added. After citing the optimistic *ethic* of Kant and Schleiermacher, the ethics of the bourgeoisie in the Ritschlian School, the ethics of Troeltsch, of the new German economic civilization, he declares that "the era of the *old* ethics is *gone* forever. For something *has* happened. The old world has not been destroyed, to be sure, and the old man has not been put off. . . . Over against man's confidence and belief in himself there has been written, in huge proportions and with utmost clearness, a *mene, mene, tekel.*" "We see more clearly than our fathers that the problem of ethics is not only a sickness of man but a sickness unto *death*: this is not merely a passing impression of the after-war period . . . it is an insight which is laid upon us by reality . . . it is through the unescapable severity of this doom that we come upon the reality of *God*. . . . It is because *God Himself* and *God alone* lends our life its possibility that it becomes so impossible for us to live" (*ibid.*, pp. 149, 169).

With characteristic thoroughness German investigators have set about discovering how far the secular frame of mind has affected Church attendance. A summary of results reveals disquieting facts. The tendency to absenteeism from Church worship was noticeable before the war: since then it has become almost a national apostasy. At Emden in 1925 all the Churches conducted a "Come to Church Campaign," and

Roman Catholic priests co-operated with Lutheran and Reformed Church pastors in that effort. The Romans declared that people who formerly attended their churches in Germany had left "by the million"; a striking declaration when one considers how seldom Rome admits any losses. K. Themal has issued a book on *The Religious Situation in the Rural Areas in the Post-War Time* (Berlin, 1925). Speaking of North Germany and Brandenburg, he "thinks the modern world as dark as Paul's heathen world; youths are to be seen standing outside the churches in the countryside where once they would be inside." The remedy he seeks "in the Barthian doctrines; a return to the Bible experience of God joined on to the eschatological element which is final, the absolute character of the religion of Jesus" (p. 51). Another investigator, Dr Schmitz, has explored "The Spiritual Life on the Frontier of West Prussia." Religious things are almost absent, folk-song, stories, fables, glees, fine arts, are the only things mentioned. The Communists and a large proportion of the orators of the Social Democratic Party are continually attacking the existing social order, which is attributed to the Churches. For years they have been declaiming that "everything must be dragged down into the dust—Fatherland, Church, and faith—while the multitude applauds and often cannot restrain its delight at the vulgar mockery of sacred things." The economic unsettlement after the war has still further intensified the absorption of the workers' thoughts in things of this world. At the

Lausanne Conference on Faith and Order it was openly said that "the world of men is slowly passing out of the Churches." And it is significant that the committee of leading Germans working under the auspices of the Carnegie Foundation for International Peace have issued a book with the title (English rendering), *Spiritual and Ethical Workings of the War in Germany* (Stuttgart, Deutsche Verlags-anstalt, 1927), the headings of the chapters telling their own tale: "The Shattering of Trade"; "The Coarsening of Feeling"; "The Decline of Self-Control and of Efforts to Secure Wealth"; "The Brutalizing in the Sexual Sphere," etc. It must be added that the findings of this committee have not passed unchallenged.

In such an atmosphere Barth has found such great response to his appeal. In typical German fashion he explores the theory which lies at the back of the socialist movement and connects it with the idealism of Fichte through the line, Feuerbach—Marx—Lenin. The steps are easily found. Fichte taught that "as surely as man is a rational being, he is the end of his own existence . . . he exists absolutely for his own sake, his being is its own ultimate object" (*Vocation of the Scholar*, Eng. trans., p. 19 f.). Hegel went further and said man was necessary to God to enable Him to realize Himself; pretty much as Mr Britling, in H. G. Wells' story, is helping to make God God. In other words, when man inspects his consciousness by psychological analysis, what he thinks is the object, God, is only

himself. Hegel's words should be cited. "Man knows only of God in so far as God in man knows Himself: this knowing is God's self-consciousness but just as well a knowing of the same by man, and this knowing of God by man is knowing of man by God. The spirit of man to know of God is only the Spirit of God Himself" (*Philosophie der Religion*, *Werke*, XII., p. 496). Feuerbach, for whom Barth has warm feeling, started from Hegel's merging of God in man, and said, "The essential nature of man is not only the *ground*, it is also the *object* of religion. . . . The Absolute, the God of Man, is man's own nature: . . . consciousness of God is self-consciousness, knowledge of God is self-knowledge" (*The Essence of Christianity*, Geo. Eliot's trans., pp. 1 f., 12). As Dorner put it, "Man, not having as yet become conscious of his own Divine nature, projects the same from himself, transfers it to another and an imaginary being, and personifies it in God." Feuerbach's view has lately been revived by Mr Middleton Murry in his book on *God*. "Theology has at length become anthropology," said Feuerbach (*op. cit.*, p. 39, German edition). Karl Marx took up such ideas: God was but a fiction of man's, and Feuerbach's brutal aphorism, "man is what he eats," became the basis of the Marxian creed that the chief end of man was grounded in economics. Lenin, of whom Barth has little to say, has carried the idea farther. "Religion," he wrote, "is an opiate for the people, a sort of spiritual vodka. . . . The modern worker casts off religious prejudices and

leaves heaven to the parsons and devout bourgeois, while he tries to win a better life on earth " (*Socialism and Religion*).

By that acute analysis Barth has rendered great service to the German workers who still retain religious feelings, for they dearly love a theory which explains facts. His avowed sympathy, as a Socialist, with the working classes has won him support. He blames them not so much as the Church for its blindness in not anticipating Marx's construction and distortion of the real significance of religion : its vacillation and weakness in face of the just demands of the workers for their proper share in the fruits and profits of their toil. Had the Church taught that real knowledge of God frees man from all hypostases and idols ; that man cannot redeem himself but must ever again create new ideologies and idols, then the rousing of suspicion against the Churches would not have issued in their departure from its precincts. He " suggests that the atheism of Social Democracy is a *Mene-tekel* for the Church " (vide *TK.*, p. 233 ff.). He boldly told his Church Assembly that on nationalism, militarism, and other burning problems they were always two steps behind the world, and had no voice of a prophet or watchman amid the chaos of other voices ringing in their ears (*cf. ibid.*, p. 103).

Another note struck by Barth helps to explain the wide response to his message. He has emphasized that in the ' crisis ' where man confronts God man attains for the first time true personality and individuality. In an age where

the economic readjustments of industry through rationalization sweep throughout Germany the individual has felt himself suppressed. In Russia the man is but a unit in a mass and only of value for his produce of labour. The machine of trade organization has triumphed over the individual. So it comes as a message of good news to hear that there is a God who cares for the unit: that man is of infinite worth for what he is in himself and will be "when the work of grace is done."

We come now to the ethical situation in Germany which is most manifest in the Youth Movement. We have not space to tell of the vast organization which has sprung up within this century and is now numbered by the million.[1] The chief watchwords of this movement are Back to Nature, Freedom from the Control of Old-Fogeyism, Romantic Idealism of National Heroes. The problem in the Churches of most countries is thus raised acutely: how to retain or even regain youth for the service of God. The ethical note struck by Barth is ever, "obedience to God." This is worked out by means of his theology of 'crisis' wherein first is heard the voice of God speaking to the individual. The relief of young Germany at being freed from the domination of the military caste has broken out in rhapsodic delight in the phenomena of nature. There was a strong resentment against the 'old-fogeyism' of the old order whose watchword was always 'Verboten.' Youth kicked

[1] A good account was given in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 18th April 1929.

over the traces: bands of both sexes went off on 'hikes' at week-ends, and the greatest promiscuity often took place. Free-love became as fashionable as in America. Romanticism was an intoxication, and the 'gushiness' of Schleiermacher's *Reden* reappeared after a century. Hero-worship became a religion: Bismarck has been ranked among the 'Heroes of Religion'; which includes Mahomet, Jesus Christ, and Goethe. Mysticism acquired a vogue to which German 'Gemüthlichkeit' has ever a warm regard. Rudolf Otto and others have been taking deep-sea soundings in Indian mysticism and reviving Eckhart, the great mediæval German mystic. The pathos and abandon, combined with a purity of tone, reverential scrutiny of nature's hidden forces, joyous comradeship which characterize the better features of this Youth Movement are well caught by Hans Herneder, whose romance, *Der Wunderapostel*, has had a great sale, so far as Germany is concerned. The wandering Indian who is the hero is seeking a 'ripe soul' to carry on the age-long mystic lore of the East, from which alone the Renaissance of broken Europe can spring. Of course it is a German youth, musical, ever *en rapport* with Mother Nature, who is to complete the work of Jesus Christ. The grim facts of life owing to the cost of repairing the ravages of war have somewhat sobered all classes. The Roman Catholic Church has been the chief, if not the only one, of the Churches to seek to capture this new movement, by truckling to it (so some say), by wisely adapting them-

selves to emergencies (so speak the Romish leaders). Youth left the Orthodox Churches in droves.

Barth has great sympathy for the young folks. He said: "However we may be justified in wagging our heads over youth's fantastic drive for freedom, it is certain that our final attitude cannot be surprise and opposition; the Youth Movement of the present time in all its phases is directed against authority for its own sake, and whoever desires to be an educator to-day must stand in principle upon the side of our young people." Barth has even been charged with seeking to found a new Youth Movement. The title of his paper *Zwischen den Zeiten* suggests a line from a poet of the movement: "Der Wanderer zwischen zwei Welten" (the wanderer between two worlds). At each new phase of the Youth Movement, Barth has had a message. When the Spartacists were to the fore, his own socialistic leanings, acquired with Kutter of Basle with whom he worked, gave him their ear. Then at the outbreak of the war he used the slogan of the movement to good purpose. They vowed: "We determine to shape our lives in obedience to our own conscience, accepting the burden of our own responsibility." Barth was anti-war: a pacifist: and still is. But that slogan gave him a chance to bring back attention to the doctrine of conscience as taught by Kant. Brunner counters the teaching of mysticism and the adulation of Schleiermacher by exposing its ambiguity and divergence from both Luther's and Calvin's

teachings. The exuberance of unleashed youth, the 'castles in Spain' of the Communists, the licence of a relaxed ethical code, the 'urge' and the swagger of the newly-enfranchised are all compared with the old tales from Genesis, the 'tower of Babel,' the Serpent's lure, "Ye shall be as Gods," or with the Greek myths of the Titans, and Prometheus defying Zeus. And now that the reaction has set in, and the commercial crisis is felt, they astutely turn the crisis in the moral life of mankind to use by which to proclaim Christian truths. Instead of self-rule, "each man doing that which is right in his own eyes," they preach Theonomy, the rule of God's law, which, as Kant said, made up "religion as the knowledge of all our duties as Divine commands." So these Swiss preachers brought the cool, logical, critical methods of the schools as a cold douche to this heady wine, and proclaimed the old Reformers' maxim: "Not by works but by faith; man is nought, God's glory is all." Then the cry arose: "Is God a myth? Does He speak still?" if so, "Where?" And thus Barth got home with his great message "In the Word": in the conscience: in the Church: in the Crisis.

But when he turns to the Church he finds there the same "sickness unto death" that afflicts the world outside the Church's walls.

## CHAPTER V

### THE 'VACUUM' IN THE CHURCHES

THE 'vacuum' Barth alludes to in the above phrase includes both the empty buildings and the emptiness of much of the teaching and practice within the Churches. He and Brunner are much concerned about the doctrines taught in the Churches and from the Reformation standpoint can discern a great decline. "The question of right doctrine," says the former, "introduces us to the vacuum *inside* our Churches and *inside* Christianity." Brunner told a New York audience over a year ago that "Protestant theology is in a state of rapid dissolution . . . the substance of Christian theology is in a stage of complete decomposition." He went on to dissect the causes which were producing this decomposition. "The science taught in most of our leading theological schools under the name of Christian theology ought rather to be called the science of religion. For the subject matter is not the word of God—the revelation in Christ, but something totally different: religion, and perhaps revelation in general" (*TC.*, p. 2 f.). The mark of the Renascence and Reformation eras was "emancipation from all authority as such, not only of Roman Catholicism," but also "from that concrete

authority which is the basis of the whole Christian Church—the revelation in Jesus Christ." Instead of that there is substituted a purely secular culture which is focused in man and based on reason. Modern science has had a hand. The Bible world-view was sapped by the discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler, Newton. Then the historical sciences and Biblical criticism came with the collapse of faith in the unity and infallibility of the Bible. Then came the science of biology and the theory of evolution in the last century. "From 1700 to 1900, Christian theology changes its distinctively Christian bearings and drifts with an idealistic immanence faith into theological liberalism. 1900 marks the date when it sank into relative scepticism." The results are that "Biblical dualistic concepts have been replaced by progressive monistic and optimistic idealism—Biblical doctrines of salvation and revelation by Stoic and Platonic ideas: the Son of God is changed into a religious genius and hero: *creatio ex nihilo* becomes *creatio continua*, evolution: salvation is identified with religious behaviour and ethical betterment: judgment and forgiveness are resolved into the subjective value of a sentimentally religious kind" (*ibid.*, pp. 4-7).

Not only is there decay of faith within the Church; the world outside has been affected and infected. "To-day," he says, "doubt assails not only Christianity—no, every world-view: not only the fundamentally Christian ethical and historical viewpoint, but all ethics, every norm,

every absolute is endangered. . . . The idealistic-liberal world-view has been progressively undermined by a naturalistic positivism and pragmatism. . . . The modern man no longer believes in an absolute, in whatever form it may be offered, whether that of the Christian faith, of idealism or mysticism. If he believes in anything at all it is absolute uncertainty." He concludes, "An age which has lost its faith in an absolute has lost everything. It must perish. It has no vitality left to face the crisis: its end can only be—the end" (*ibid.*, p. 8).

Barth describes that process more from the effect upon the Church consciousness than from the external forces which have entered as a decomposing element. The Reformation position was that through the Word of God in Scripture, aided by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, believers heard *God* speaking. Later, "people began surrounding the witness of the Holy Spirit with other reasons for belief in order to support a proof in which they no longer had perfect trust. . . . And when historical criticism began objecting to the antiquity, the genuineness, the historical reliability of Biblical literature, no one any longer knew the only possible answer, the answer of freedom and Christian reality. . . . We lost the wonder of *God*: the great misery of Protestantism began. Doctrine, parted from its life-giving origin, hardened into Orthodoxy; Christian experience, confusing itself with this origin, took refuge in Pietism; truth, no longer understood and actually no longer understand-

able, shrivelled into the moral and sentimental maxims of the Enlightenment; and finally, even Christian experience was reduced in Schleiermacher and his followers, both of the left wing and the right, to the hypothesis of being the highest expression of a religious instinct common to all men" (*WG.*, p. 245 f. Eng. trans.).

Many other forces have combined to create that 'vacuum.' For one thing, Luther transferred to the State many of the powers of the Mediæval Church and made the Church subservient to the State rulers. The close association of Church and State in the German lands has had its evil consequences now that the franchise and the revolution in 1918 have removed the old connexion. Yet the new State has not gone so far as the French nation did to disestablish the Church. Barth as a Swiss and a member of the Reformed Church has the democratic outlook, and pleads for the like detachment of the Church of Luther from the official Government as prevails in his own country.

Count Keyserling bears witness to the 'vacuum' within the Lutheran Church in Germany to-day. "There is no longer any Church since Luther's day in evangelical Germany. It is but a form of life of the German sort (*i.e.* purely nationalistic). . . . There were times when men dreamed of overcoming the opposition (of the working class): that time is now gone by." The task of to-day he thinks to be, "To yoke all forces to make the Bible once more the book of life of Evangelical Christendom" (cited by O.

Dibelius, *The Century of the Church*, pp. 29, 226, 206, 209 f.).

There is much valuable evidence supplied concerning the present state of things in the German Churches in the volume of essays edited by Paul Tillich last year under the title, *Protestantismus als Kritik und Gestaltung* (Darmstadt). Adolf Allwohn in his essay makes these points. 'Preaching is now, not God's direct word, but instruction, and so the purpose of worship is abandoned." "The practical over-emphasis of cultural ends and purposes outside the ends of religious worship indicates a collapse of worship, for worship can only be directed to union with God." "Soon religion disappears in the region where utility and rationalism prevail: the service becomes a social gathering and the buildings lose their sacredness: man is made the measure of all things in worship: *his* aims, *his* feelings, *his* opinions are everything." Allwohn lays the blame on Schleiermacher's teachings, whose dictum that worship was the presentation of church-consciousness is not a realization of the Absolute. "Preaching has degenerated into becoming a scientific discourse and at best is but a setting forth of the general truths of reason; worship has been thrust out of its central position to the periphery, and the church has become a society for religious-ethical culture, the sign of which is that instead of *God's* House there has been substituted a social centre." (pp. 186-192).

Barth and Brunner see in the frantic efforts of the Churches to attract the masses a practical

confession of the 'vacuum' within the Church generally. Barth asks, "What is the use of all the preaching, baptizing, confirming, bell-ringing, organ-playing, of all the religious moods and modes—the community houses with or without motion-picture equipment, the efforts to enliven church singing, the unspeakably tame and stupid monthly church papers and whatever else may belong to the equipment of modern ecclesiasticism?" He pours his scorn on "the facetious proposal to fill the aching void in the Church of the Word by a so-called 'sacrament of—silence.'" And so of the Protestant experiments "to establish a new church with democratic manners and socialistic motives, building community houses, organizing discussion groups, planning special musical services," he says they are "an attempt to supply worldly society with an ecclesiastical cupola or wing."

In those words he hits at the attempt of Heiler to introduce Roman Catholicism into Lutheranism, to establish a High Church movement akin to the Anglo-Catholic movement in England. His bitterest criticism is directed against Pietism and Otto's mysticism. The English reader must guard against taking these words in the English sense of the terms. By Pietism is meant something akin to Plymouth Brethrenism in this country: the little coteries of 'elect' folks, who leave the world and 'enjoy' their religion. And mysticism in German speech usually denotes something akin to the 'Ranters' of early Primitive Methodism: a gush of feeling without much

content of thought. In both forms of religious life we have the same turning to the inward states of feeling which makes the subjective moods of man the measure of religion. God is not the central thing: man's emotions are. Hence Barth says justly that the Pietists are close akin to Cartesianism in making man the measure of all things.

Another thing which accounts for the 'vacuum' is the fact that the Church is now one department alongside of others in the sphere of cultural life. The educational institutions which shape the minds of the young generation are conducted without the religious background which the Church seeks to supply. This problem is most acute in Germany. The relativism of Einstein's studies penetrates other departments of intellectual life. The historical sciences, when applied to the scrutiny of the documents of Scripture, leave the mind very uncertain as to the actual facts recorded in those documents. Then the modern psychologies, especially those of Freud and Jung, resolve the common notions of sin into complexes of nervous states. Here again man is the one object studied, and the result is a vague uncertainty as to what can be believed about the inward moral nature of man. And the study of comparative religions has placed Christianity as one among many: perhaps the best but surely not the absolutely best. Then the religious-historical studies which have followed upon Ritschl's emphasis on history to the exclusion of metaphysics, have tended to make Christianity a mere

product of the Hellenistic-Roman *milieu* of the first century; a compound of myth and superstition, mixed with uncritical folk-views regarding the miraculous. And the religious life within the Churches feels the influence of indifference and suspicion which the modern methods of education with their results bring to bear. The present situation can be summed up in a phrase used by the Pope in Browning's *Ring and the Book*:

> "There's a new tribunal now
> Higher than God's, the educated man's."

The uneducated working classes, with the advent of the franchise, have become the final court of appeal and, as the previous chapter showed, they have little use for the Churches. The effect of relativism, which is the mark of contemporary thought, has filtered down to the proletariat. The dependence upon the voluntary contributions of the congregations constitutes a temptation to the ministers and clergy to talk down to the level of their supporters. Here again man is the central concern; his likings, his interests, his pleasure is the objective of much of the activities of the clergy and Church. He is appealed to, if he have some smattering of culture, on the æsthetic side—by music, by art within the Roman Catholic churches, and increasingly among the Lutheran congregations. Man then becomes the connoisseur, the observer, the contemplator; he is not brought into question; his taste is studied and *de gustibus non disputandum*. All taste is relative to the fineness of the palate.

From the socialistic side, especially from Russia, comes this stress upon the material satisfactions as the test of religion. A quotation or two from Russian literature will make this point quite clear. Deborin, Lenin's interpreter, wrote: "To make relativism the basis of a theory of knowledge implies a confession of absolute scepticism, agnosticism, sophistry or subjectivism. Relativism as the basis of a theory of knowledge is rather the denial of any objective measure or standard, which exists independent of man and to which our knowledge approaches." Lenin was fond of a passage from Pisarev (1841-1868) who opposed æstheticism thus: "We shall try to destroy æstheticism in order to concentrate the attention and the intellectual energies of society upon a minimum of imperious and unavoidable objectives of primordial importance, such as the destruction of all routine and prejudices, the moral and material uplifting of the masses. One must always draw the attention of society to economic and social problems, systematically opposing all that diverts the intellectual energies of cultivated persons from their mission." Another passage much relished was from Fritz Gerlich's *Der Kommunismus als Lehre vom Tausend jaehrigen Reich* (Communism as Doctrine of the Millennium). "There is here a rivalry of Gods," he wrote. "The God of Marxism, the law of nature, the law of evolution, of economic conditions is at war with the personal God of Christianity. The commandment of all religious doctrines is at work here too: 'I am

the Lord thy God, thou shalt have no other God but me.'" The working pastor, such as Barth was, and Gogarten and Thurneysen still are, has to work in an intellectual atmosphere impregnated with such 'poison gas.' It is an interesting situation for the spectator. Both Barth and Lenin see in æstheticism and mere moralism a common foe. But the one, Lenin, dealt his blow at all religion: the other, at materialism. Both are realists and sworn foes of idealogues. Lenin wrote to Maxim Gorky: "Any faith in God, however pure, ideal, and spontaneous, must be regarded as that 'ideological plague.'" Barth and Brunner never weary of their attack on idealistic philosophy. Both Lenin and Barth are foes of the self-contemplation of the Pietist and mystic. Lenin in the same letter wrote: "From the social and not the personal point of view all God-creating is nothing but the tender self-contemplation of the dull *petite bourgeoisie*." Barth could have written that. And the method of approach to the solution of their respective problems is curiously the same! viz., the dialectical one. For Lenin wrote: "Dialectics shows how opposites can be and actually are identical, it shows under what conditions they are transformed into each other and become identical and why human reason must regard these opposites not as dead and fixed, but as vital, conditioned, movable and in process of transformation into one another. The condition precedent to any knowledge of the processes of the world in its 'automatic motion,' in its spontaneous develop-

ment, in its vital being, is to conceive of them as a unity of opposites, for evolution means struggle of opposites." (I am indebted to Fuelop-Mueller's *Mind and Face of Bolshevism* for the above citations from Russian literature, pp. 164, 72, 66). How Barth applies this dialectical method in theology —the point most difficult for British readers to follow—must be reserved to a separate chapter.

The situation may be summed up thus. In the world outside the Churches relativism and materialism reign supreme. There is no objective standard, no absolute norm, by which to measure things. Inside the Churches the pastors and preachers are conscious of a 'vacuum' also. Their staple themes are all infected with the relativism of current thinking. The Scriptural authority on which Protestantism was grounded has been undermined by criticism. A refuge was sought in "the feeling of absolute dependence on God," as taught by Schleiermacher; modern psychological research has shown that feeling is a point of indifference, a being determined from without. All the study of the psychology of religion never gets beyond the inward states to the object, which in religion is God. Then the religious mind sought in history for some firm foothold. But history is relative to the transmitters of records; their psychological state when selecting facts and ascribing causes thereto, brings us again to the relativism of feeling states. And in the Gospel narratives literary criticism has left the greatest uncertainty about the actual words said to be spoken by Jesus.

It is to meet such a situation that Barth and Brunner direct all their energies. They seek a remedy. They claim to find the absolute standard on the ethical side of man's nature. They start, scientifically, with the actual state of man as existent. They fully admit that there is no way up from man to a Divine Being, if such there be. They ask if there has been any way down from above, from the world beyond time and space. They find in the Bible evidence of a revelation, a Word of God to man. They pass on to examine the conditions of revelation and the effects upon the men who claim to have received one. From that position they gain a standard by which to measure man, his history, his destiny, his inner contradictions, and claim that they have a theology, a message, which explains man's existence.

Their method of explanation has of necessity to be adjusted to the mentality of the persons to whom they speak. The present trends of thought on the Continent have determined their point of approach. Brunner takes the philosophical line to counterwork and undermine the philosophical presuppositions which rule now, and supplant them by substituting a reasonable theory based on the revelation of God. Barth's chief line is to equip the ministers with a positive message of God. Both see that the strategic course is to take up more seriously the education of ministers and preachers and fill up the 'vacuum' in their message by the objective content, God. They have undertaken an immense task. They have

to ask and answer the fundamental questions of thought and religion. Does the eternal world break through into time? Is there a God? Does He speak? If so, how? And through whom? And what is history in view of such a speaking? These are some of their root-questions to which they seek answers. What answers they give now engage our attention as we proceed to the second part of our work.

# PART II

## THE BARTHIAN MESSAGE

### CHAPTER VI

#### SOME PRESUPPOSITIONS

THE word 'Voraussetzung' (presupposition) occurs very often in Barth's criticisms of the positions in theology of others, and he and his friends are not without theirs. Mandell Creighton used to say that the presuppositions of the critical mind need examining no less than those of the orthodox mind. From two axioms these Swiss theologians proceed as they approach the problems of philosophy and theology. These are regulative of all their thinking on the formal side. One is taken from the old Reformed doctrine as applied to the dual nature of Jesus Christ: *finitum non est capax infiniti* (the finite has not capacity for the infinite). The other is drawn from Kierkegaard, the Dane: "There is an infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity; 'God is in heaven, man on earth.'" Then the affinity of these two axioms with the neo-Kantian criticism is very close. Put shortly, that criticism of the knowing faculties of the mind limits their exercise to phenomena in this world (*Diesseits*) and, save through the practical reason, conscience,

man has not access to the world 'beyond' (*Jenseits*).

As regards the material contents presupposed, they are the tenets of the theology of the Reformed Church. The dominant idea of God is that of sovereignty: His Creatorship, His will, absolute and free, His condescending grace are the attributes most dwelt upon. His mind can only be known as He chooses to reveal Himself, and that He has done solely in the Scriptures, which include both Testaments, and in Jesus Christ, the God-man. When we ask where in Scripture the Divine voice is heard, we find very vague answers in Barth. He simply takes over the stock view of the theology of his Church, and assumes that anywhere inside the covers of the Bible we may come across the voice of God speaking. Yet he and Brunner, still more Bultmann, are far from the position of the Bible literalist. They admit the right and the need of criticism as one approaches the text of the Scriptures. It would perhaps be accurate to say that the Word spoken by God is to be found within the words written by man. They would draw, in German fashion, a distinction between the 'form' and the 'content.' The latter, apart from the former, is what they mean by the Word of God. At this point they are out of agreement with the Biblicist and the Fundamentalist.

Brunner, when in America, actually discussed the relation of criticism to Scripture at Dayton, and his remarks are worth attention. "Fundamentalism," he said, "conflicts with science

because it is not truly Christian. . . . The principles of true Christianity and of true criticism are identical. . . . Fundamentalism errs by insisting on rigidity and finality of form, which, through lack of critical insight, it assumes to be essential to its existence. . . . He who identifies the letters and words of Scripture with the Word of God has never truly understood the Word of God—he knows not what constitutes revelation." Brunner frankly told his audiences that he was an adherent of "a rather radical school of Biblical criticism, which does not, *e.g.*, accept the Gospel of John as an historical source and which finds legends in many parts of the Synoptics" (*TC.*, pp. 14, 18, 19, 41). Barth too has a loose attitude to the mere letter. "The canon (of Scripture), in the extent in which it has come to us, has not dropped from heaven," he writes in the *Dg.*, and declares that "the reality of revelation is indirectly identical with the reality of the Bible: indirectly, for we know that the Bible is one, and revelation another, thing." He adds, "Christian Churches and theology must let historism say its say out, in order that, when it has said what with full right it has to say about the Biblical text, the Church and theology may go on their own feet and say the other, the altogether other thing, that no longer is it devout men who are speaking but God's own voice is being heard" (pp. 346, 386). In this presupposition as to Scripture, the men of to-day, in the Reformed Church, are at the free position Luther took when he criticized the Epistle of James as an epistle of

straw, and gave as his standard that "the right touchstone of all books of the Bible is, do they 'drive' Christ or not?"

Another presupposition taken over from the official theology is the view of the total depravity of man through sin. By that, man is utterly incapable of getting back to his presumed, sinless state. As with Calvin, so with Barth, the chief form of sin in man is pride, Titanism. And the virtue of all virtues to mark the regenerate Christian is absolute obedience.

The extent of the fall of man explains another presupposition of our authors; their peculiar view of history and all that is contained in history. They take over the dogmatic view that all history is comprised between Adam's fall and Christ's resurrection. We shall deal with this more fully: at this point we sketch in advance the hypotheses which are assumed in the thinking. There is no need for us to deal with the vast extent of common ground in theology held by the Reformed Church theologians which is shared by practically all sections of the Christian Church through the earth. As with the Lutheran Church, the Reformed took over a large amount of agreed doctrine from the pre-Reformation Church, *i.e.*, the Roman Catholic mediæval teaching, as summed up in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. Hence much of Barth's *Dg.* takes up the cardinal Christian doctrines as to God, His attributes, the Trinity, the Divinity of our Lord and of the Holy Spirit, etc., and Brunner's *M.* on the whole is truly orthodox as tested by the creeds. Those



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aspects we shall take for granted and confine our attention to the special features of their teaching which evoke criticism and opposition from other schools of opinion who claim to be orthodox also.

But one point arises to check us when we try to construe the Barthian doctrines as a system. We have already quoted Barth's disclaimer of any intention to construct a system (p. 24 f.). Barth is growing year by year. Every edition of his *Romans* marks changes in his position. In the Prefaces he admits as much and says that he has dropped much that he formerly held and has taken up new positions. Explicitly he said that the position he and his friends hold is really " an instant in a movement (like the ' movies '), and any view of it is comparable to the momentary view of a bird in flight. Aside from the motion it is absolutely meaningless, incomprehensible, and impossible " (cf. *WG.*, p. 282). Hence we are to allow that there is no static system ; all is in flux, or, to use a favourite expression of Barth's, all is preliminary, prolegomena. Even the *Dg.* is preliminary ; it bears the sub-title, " Prolegomena to Christian Dogmatics," and another volume is announced to follow. It might be urged that we should wait till he has completely shaped out a system. " Art is long, life short." Enough has been written to enable us to see the main outlines if not a filled-in picture. Along with Brunner and the other friends there is substantial agreement on main points. Those points can be stated as being : The Transcendency of

God, The Brokenness of Humanity, The Invasion of Time by Eternity, The Resulting Crisis, The Bridge between Two Worlds on different planes, The View of History (pre-temporal, temporal, post-temporal), where God speaks and man hears. The ensuing chapters will take up these points or aspects of the Barthian message. Then the criticisms of opponents will be put forth to enable us to estimate the present value of this new mode of teaching.

## VII

### THE TRANSCENDENT GOD

WHEN Barth 'pulled the church-tower bell' with his Romans commentary, the resounding boom was of the transcendence, the absoluteness of God. That sound goes reechoing through page after page of the huge volume. As the book has never been put into an English dress, a few extracts may give some conception of its penetrating note and its sombre power. Take this, at the opening of a page at random, on Rom. i. 16, 'the power of God.' "The power is the action, the miracle of all miracles in which God gives Himself to be known as who He is, viz., as the Unknown God who dwells in light which no man can approach unto, the Holy One, the Creator and Redeemer." After citing Acts xvii. 23, he proceeds, "All divinities which remain on this side of the line drawn by the resurrection, who dwell in temples made with hands and are served by human hands—all divinities which 'need someone,' *e.g.*, men who think to give them names (Acts xvii. 24 f.) are not God. God is the Unknown God. As such He gives life and breath and all to all. And so His power is neither a force of nature nor a force of soul, nor anything at all of the Higher Powers

of which we know or can possibly know, neither the Highest, nor their sum nor their spring, but the crisis of all Powers, the Altogether Other, measured by whom they are something and nothing, their Prime Mover and Final Term, their source uplifting them all and their purpose grounding them all. Pure and supreme stands God's power, not alongside of or over (*super*-natural) but the yon-side of all conditioned-conditioning powers: not to be confused with them, not to be ranked with them, only with extremest caution to be compared with them. The Power of God, the Installation of Jesus to be the Christ (i. 4) is in the strictest sense *pre*-supposition, free from all conceivable content. In the Spirit it comes into being and in the Spirit it wills to be known. It is self-sufficient, absolute, and in itself true. It is the directly new that in man's reflection on God becomes the decisive turning factor" (p. 11 f.).

In that passage Barth has set God immensely above the deities of the world Paul lived in, and the substitutes for God which modern philosophy and scientific research into Nature's forces have put into the 'modern' man's mind. All modern ideas of immanence are thus set aside by this emphasis on God's transcendence. He probably had in mind the well-known lines of Goethe, which run in literal prose: "What were a God that only impelled the world from without? It becomes Him to stir it by an inward energy, to involve Nature in Himself, Himself in Nature, so that that which lives and moves and has a

being in Him, can never feel the want of His power or His Spirit" (*Gott und Welt*). In such a passage, God becomes involved in Nature, and conditioned thereby, and against such an idea, infringing God's sovereignty, Barth ever vehemently protests. And the frame of mind which would thus venture to say what God ought to do is presumption, Titanism, sin. The student of philosophy will discern how nearly every speculative construction of the world is touched upon in the passage: Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, Pantheism, Deism, all are swept aside when put alongside of the stupendous manifestation of Divine power, displayed at the establishment of Jesus as Christ by the resurrection from the dead.

We give another passage, on Romans ix. 1-5 (p. 315 f.), where the transcendence of God and the Gospel hope as regards man are put with Barth's usual vigour. "God, the pure limit and the pure beginning of all that we are, have, and do, in infinite qualitative distinction confronting man and all that is human, never at all identical with what we name as God, experience, surmise, and worship as God—God, the absolute Halt! over against all human disquiet, and the absolute Forward! over against all human repose, the Yea in our Nay and the Nay in our Yea, the First and the Last and as such the Unknown, but never at all one magnitude among others in the *milieu* known to us—this is the Living God. And this is the Evangel, the message of salvation of Jesus Christ. This Hidden God, the Living One, reveals Himself as such that the Impossible

as such shines out over the visibly infinite realm of the possible, the Invisible over the visible, the Yon-side over the This-side, not as Another, Second, Separated One, but as His now and here revealed Truth, as the Origin to which all is referred, as the removal of all relativity and therefore as the reality of all relative realities: that God's Kingdom, inevitableness, existentiality, victory, and majesty cannot remain hidden to man, in spite of—nay, because of—man's temporality, finitude, and transiency of this his life; that the knowing this God, belief in Him which becomes energy in love which is possibility never realized in any moment, in any moment is realizable, in any moment is a possibility to be realized anew which is bidden of man—the possibility to be what he is in God, God's child, and therefore as this man in this world one subjected to judgment, an observer of righteousness, an expector of redemption, and by grace one already set free."

The note sounded by Barth, and the paradoxical mode of expression, can be found in all his colleagues' writings. Gogarten, for instance, has a brief passage which runs thus: "This (God) is the Unrecognized by our understanding, the Uncomprehended by our concepts, the Immeasurable by our measures, the Ungraspable for our graspings. He is the Origin and End of all our knowing and conceiving, all our standards and experiences" (*Von Glauben und Offenbarung*, 1923, p. 11).

At this point we shall not stay to indicate the criticism such an emphasis on God's transcend-

ence has provoked ; that will be dealt with later. But it is as well to insert here the observation made by Brunner concerning how God's transcendence is to be construed. He says, "Transcendence is to be taken as epistemological and not as cosmological. We hold, *i.e.*, that God cannot be known by His active presence in the world, but is regarded as hidden, so that what God is is not revealed" (*TC.*, p. 28, footnote).

We give another passage from the *Rom.*, on Abram's faith (Rom. iv. 3-5 ; p. 95 f.), in which Barth's characteristic ideas, modes of expression, and insight into Scripture in the light of modern theories of knowledge are closely packed together. "All in his (Abram's) life that is still grounded in another, as working of a cause, sequence, and givenness in a series and in so far visible—all that stands on 'this-side' of the death-line separates time from eternity, man from God even when it gives so strongly testimony of a 'Yon-side.' 'Yon-side' of the death-line is God ; begrounding as the Ungrounded, essential as without any essence, known as the Unknown, speaking in His silence, pitiful in His unapproachable holiness, enjoining responsibility as the Sustainer of everything, claiming obedience in His sole-activity, gracious in His judgment, *not* man and precisely therefore the pure Source, the unlosable home, the first and last truth, the Creator and Redeemer and Sovereign of man.

"God is ever transcendent to man, new, remote, foreign, surpassing, never in man's sphere, never man's possession ; whoso says God, says miracle.

Indeed God stands as Either-Or before man's soul; over against God there is therefore an electing or rejecting, an affirming or negating, a waking or a sleeping, understanding or misunderstanding of man. But possible, probable, visible, and conceivable is ever only that rejection, denial, over-sleeping, and mis-knowing of God, that non-seeing of the Invisible, that non-grasping of the Ungraspable. As surely as man has no organ for miracle, so surely all human experience and understanding directly vanish there where it begins—in God. So far as it comes on the human side to an affirming and understanding of God, so far as the psychical process receives the direction of God, determination by God, which accepts the form of faith, there appears the impossible, miracle, paradox. For the insight of Abram that God's word is a working-force (Rom. iv. 21) is the impossible. The insight that God calls the non-existent as if existent (iv. 17) is miracle. The insight that glory (*doxa*) belongs to God goes against appearance (Ger. *Schein*; *doxa*; *cf.* the Greek *nuance*), it is the *para*-dox. And just this insight is faith. . . ."

Waiving for the moment the consideration of such a passage as it bears on God's transcendence, it is at this place that one can best discern Barth's meaning when he uses paradox. As the closing sentence shows, there is an apparent contradiction between the 'look' of a thing, or its 'manifestation,' and the reality behind it. As a rhetorical device it shows Barth's mastery of thought and speech; as a theological thought-

provoker it is designedly used to compel theologians, for whom this *Rom.* was written, to think and continue thinking over the postulates behind all theology. As a literary method, in the hands, say, of the earlier G. K. Chesterton, it gives a freshness to threadbare truths. As a mode of expressing theological truths it is absolutely necessary. For any expressions or statements about God can at best be but partial and incomplete and must ever fall far short of His manifold nature and many-dimensioned working. And such is the language of Scripture. "To know the love that passeth knowledge", "he endured as seeing Him that is invisible"—these and many others are in point. Or as Father Faber put it in a hymn :

> Ill that He blesses is our good,
> And unblest good is ill,
> And all is right that seems most wrong,
> If it be His sweet will.

The 'hard facts,' as we say, are illusory: the insubstantial fancy is most real, and the Christian says with Tertullian, *Credo quia absurdum.*

In these three passages selected from Barth's *Romans*—there are very many more in the same strain—the transcendence of God is emphasized so vigorously that Barth seems to verge on Deism—which Thomas Carlyle described as "an absentee God, sitting idle . . . at the outside of His Universe and *seeing* it go" (*Sartor Resartus*, p. 112). Barth seems to remove God as 'the totally Other' so far from man that he presents

a dualism and the question arises, How can the gap between God and man ever be bridged? In another chapter it will be shown how Barth answers that question. At this point, in order to understand Barth's thought, it is well to recall Brunner's remark already cited, that the transcendence is to be construed "epistemologically and not cosmologically." By those terms Brunner means that from the point of view of human faculties of knowledge, apart from revelation, man cannot find God. As man examines the cosmos he may find "vestiges of the Creator," but the Great Architect of the Universe, God Himself, man cannot find. Nor if man examines "the abysmal deeps of his own personality" can he find God within himself.

Both Barth and Brunner are there attacking the two forms of mysticism which Otto has expounded lately, the one, which swings out into the universe, cosmic emotion; the other, where man sinks within himself, like the Brahman, to find the *atman*, God, within. Their view is that God and man are at different planes or levels; that God moves in a different dimension than man, and if ever "the twain shall meet" it must be by God coming down to man's level, since man cannot of himself ascend to God. As Barth loves to put it, "God must strike down perpendicularly as the vertical line to the horizontal" (he borrows the phrase from Zündel). Of course 'coming down' does not mean a motion through space, but the spacial imagery is used to indicate man's psychological state of becoming

aware of the Divine presence. Man cannot induce or produce that state (*pacete*, mystics); God alone must 'come' and produce it in man. Put religiously, the transcendence denotes God's absolute sovereignty; in Biblical language, God is the Creator, the Sustainer of the universe of which man is a part, and between Creator and creature there is an "infinite qualitative difference."

Even a thinker so far from Barth's modes of thought as J. R. Illingworth was, used Barthian language when expressing God's transcendence. "The theological bearing of absoluteness is that God is the Perfect Being, the Almighty, the Omniscient, the Good, who sustains all finite beings in existence while transcending them as immeasurably as the Creator ever must transcend the creature. He is our infinite and absolute Other. He is all that we are not" (*Divine Transcendence*, pop. ed., p. 7). Barth would cavil at the word 'our' and say that He is never 'ours' but we are His always. He determines us and relates us to Himself; we never 'have' Him so as to relate Him to us. If we could we should be His master, or, as Barth likes to say, "we should be the Subject and He the Predicate," whereas He is always the Subject, "the first person speaking," and we are the object, "the person spoken to." If man could determine God the Divine transcendence would vanish. The revolutionary effect of Barth's way of putting things can be seen at once when we observe that the old well-worn way of theologians mounting up through the stages of natural religion, by

means of the proofs and arguments from design, etc., is abandoned; Barth has no use for the old apologetics, for there is no way 'up' to God that man can tread. And the stress upon psychology of religion and appeal to the contents of religious experience which mark present-day British theology (*vide* H. R. Mackintosh, W. R. Matthews, H. Wheeler Robinson, Canon Streeter, to name a few) are swept by the board if man "has no organ for miracle" and "all human experience and knowledge vanish—in God," as Barth affirms.

Barth stands with Luther and other Reformers with this insistence on the unknowableness of God, apart from God's self-disclosure. A passage from Luther's *Table Talk*, often alluded to by these new Reformers, makes that plain. "Although God is omnipresent, He is nowhere; I cannot lay hold of Him by my own thoughts without the Word. . . . God cannot be found in His majesty—that is, outside of His revelation of Himself in His Word. The majesty of God is too exalted and grand for us to be able to grasp it. . . . The world seeks in innumerable ways, with great industry, cost, trouble, and labour, to find the invisible and incomprehensible God in His majesty. But God is and remains to them unknown, although they have many thoughts about Him . . . for God has decreed that He will be unknowable and unapprehensible apart from Christ." So Barth starts from the revelation in the Word of God and 'corrects' all philosophy from that standpoint. As he put it in the Preface to the *Romans*

(p. xiii.): "The relation of *this* God to *this* man (on earth) is for me the theme of the Bible, the sum of philosophy in one. Philosophers name this 'Crisis' of human knowing, the first source (*Ursprung*)." Barth is well aware of all the modern attempts to find God within the human consciousness. There is a passage in the *Romans* which shows that he has digested Otto's attempt to find a religious *a priori* in human nature—and rejected it as giving no food, or nourishment. He says: "Within the contents man has of self-consciousness (or subconsciousness) there is found the impression of revelation, the knowing of good and evil, the somehow definite recognition that man belongs to God, the remembrance of his eternal origin in which he is elected to blessedness or condemnation. . . . We question as to the meaning of this particular final content of consciousness or subconsciousness, and see in any case henceforth the one thing that man stands above all things in the relation of an opposition, if even relative, yet still definite and sharp. The thought of a *numen* of any kind works startlingly, disturbingly, annoyingly on all other thoughts. So far as there is a God for man, man is more or less clearly and vigorously set in question. A chasm more or less difficult to bridge over gapes between his being and a threatening non-being opposed to this being of his, between reality and truth. A more or less strong doubt is raised whether the possible cannot be the impossible, the existent not the should-not-exist. Something of all this crisis is the meaning of every religion,

and the stronger this crisis is made to prevail all the clearer is it that we have actually to do with conscious or unconscious religion along with the phenomenon in question" (p. 226).

Barth returns to Otto's *Idea of the Holy*, and accepts his definition or designation of religion as "the sense of awe or dread," and deals with it in his latest book, the *Dg.* (p. 305 f.). "Religion's reality consists in man's awe before Another who is totally Different, Unknown in his sight, in whom man has found what escapes himself and all else that he knows, viz., the truth, the rest, and the power needed for his existence." But Barth shows that religion then becomes an "occurrence grounded in a faculty of the human soul. Man is *capable* of effort, he *can* be religious, *can have* religion." In other words, religion "is a continuation in the human soul" with God, and this is in opposition to Paul's dictum (1 Cor. ii. 9), "where religion comes into man's heart as the peculiar movement of the soul," which God alone makes. Here Barth faces and opposes the doctrine of immanence which assumes that "there is a part of the soul in which the Deity dwells particularly and displays Himself in revealing His immediate working," and "man's being in self-consciousness is one with the Divine being."

It is against such a view that Barth protests by emphasizing the Divine transcendence. He points out that in the immanental view man needs no Mediator or Reconciler, no Holy Spirit's aid; "he needs not God in order to become possible in God's presence: but blank and direct man

has the Divine only with a quantitative difference" (p. 308). Brunner also takes up that objection and makes a powerful apologetic for the transcendental view of God. His entire book, *MW.*, is devoted to the exposition of the 'fatal sickness' that has come over 'liberal' Christianity by the over-emphasis on immanence. He has condensed his arguing in *TC.*, and makes the following points: (i) Such a God is not really God; He is neither the world's sovereign nor man's. It is but the deification of the world and of man's self. (ii) Such a God is not personal, and so is inferior to man as a personal being: He only becomes a personality through man. (iii) Such a view is not based on faith, for faith is an answer to a call, a response to a challenge. An immanent God neither calls nor challenges me: He demands no decision—decision is not even possible, because the Divine is supposed to be identical with man's deepest self. Hence (iv) Man can never become personal, for decision is the essence of personality. Man only becomes personal when his will is broken into by the will of God. "An impersonal God and an impersonal man are the necessary and inevitable consequences of a religion of immanence" (p. 30 f.: the whole passage rewards study).

The exposure of the insufficiency of immanence as an explanation of religion admirably supplements current apologetics in Britain. Canon Streeter, in *Reality*, and Dr D. S. Cairns, in *The Faith that Rebels*, have shown that the supposed collision between science and religion is averted

when we see that science deals with quantities that are measurable and not with qualities. That is another aspect of the axiom from which Barth starts, " the infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity." But the further British penchant for the interpretation of God in terms of the good, the beautiful, and the true gets short shrift from this school. They would say this method is only the deification of an idea of man's ; man himself is the judge of these qualities and as such the ideas are his and we move back again within the realm of subjectivity. In Barth's expressive phrase, they are ' its ' and not a ' He,' a Person, such as God must be if religion is real. They are abstractions, and religion is relation of ' this ' concrete man, in his present ' concrete ' situation with a ' concrete ' God who is other and over and different from man. Barth has some good remarks on the necessity of maintaining the Biblical dualism and keeping the ' qualitative difference ' in mind. " To be with and in God must definitely signify to be with an irremovable Other. God in the metaphysical prolongation of our own life-urge, God as the original ground of our own *élan vital*, is in no case God. The truth and force of the relation standing in question depends on this, that it is a moving, and *truly* a moving, in which God stands over against man in not only quantitative but in qualitative superiority. This qualitative must be grasped so fundamentally as such and so stand in validity that there can be no talk of any effacing of the lines of demarcation. As *Creator*, as

Personality, as Spirit must God stand over against man in this relation." He goes on to explain why. "This new qualifying of our humanity which is God's doing must be carefully described with the greatest reservation under the concepts of cause and working, seal and impression, of great and little quantity or under the concept of evolution in its different stages; under the reservation namely that God is a 'He' and not an 'It,' as all these modes of speech all too closely suggest. . . . And man's act in this relation is real. God meets man not as a hailstorm or an earthquake; man is not as a twig on a Divine tree, or as a leaf blown by the Divine wind, or a drop in the Divine ocean, or a stone from a Divine avalanche, or as a wheel driven by a Divine motor. This meeting of God and man signifies question and answer, speech and hearing, giving and taking between them both" (*Dg.*, p. 294).

The paradoxical quality of Barth's thinking must be evident to every reader of these extracts. God is the great Unknown and still He is known: the Inaccessible who yet meets man: the Altogether Other yet known to be such. And though transcendence is the chief point stressed we are made to feel God's immanence. This may occasion difficulty to some minds but it is inevitable when thinking of the incommensurable God. There is really no contradiction when these contrasts are stated. In the wise words of a great English theologian of a former generation (Dr Wm. Bright), "Christian students

will be on their guard against such a reaction from an exclusive contemplation of the sterner side of truth (as in Calvinism) as would dispense with the motive of religious fear, and explain away that 'holy hatred of sin,' which is inseparable from the Divine government. And they will acknowledge that the infinity of a true God must be capable of self-limitation, and that the relation of the Maker to the universe must be a relation alike of 'immanence' and of 'transcendence,' even as wherever throughout His creation, moral agency exists, the freedom applied by it will be respected by His sovereignty. In short . . . they will be habituated to the idea of spiritual correspondences which are often too vast and profound for the methods of logical adjustment, and must needs present themselves, to our faculties, in parallelism" (*The Incarnation*, p. x. f.).

By his emphasis on God's transcendence Barth is restoring the reverent sense and awe which is man's proper mood when facing so sublime a theme. He pours scorn and withering rebuke upon the slight and all too easy way of talking about God, as "one's dear companion," as "walking arm in arm with God" (*vide* Lord Esher's *To-day and To-morrow*, p. 164), such as prevails in some circles supposed to be religious. Barth is all out for truly objective thinking about what God is and means. He has been in deep waters and come out not without a great struggle. He has told us how the characteristic of the folk in the Bible was "their sudden stopping, looking up, and tense attention," and that is his character-

istic also. He is a son of the Alps, and there is always the tense gaze of man up beyond the lofty peaks into the vault of heaven. "Paul," he says, "first gave him that look: this man evidently sees and hears something which is above everything, which is absolutely beyond the range of my observation and the measure of my thought." And Barth has seen something of God, caught some fragments of His speech, found an absolute that is the norm and standard for an age lost in relativity, scepticism, and unbelief. He himself has what he labours that all Christians, and especially ministers, may have, "a consciousness of a Majesty to which he may only listen and pray expectantly, ready to believe and obey: 'Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth.'"

## CHAPTER VIII

### "BROKEN HUMANITY"

"MAN is evidently made for thinking," said Blaise Pascal; "this is the whole of his dignity and the whole of his merit. To think as he ought is the whole of his duty; and the true order of thinking is to begin with himself, his Author, and his end." Yet the result of the thinking of that penetrating intellect issued in this dictum: "It is vain, O men, to seek from yourselves the remedy for your miseries. All your knowledge can reach no further than this, that you can neither find happiness nor truth in yourselves. Philosophers have promised them to you, but they promised what they could not perform. They knew neither your real condition nor your real good." And the gravity of man's disorder is put in a sentence: "It is not a foreign or a petty interest which is in dispute; ourselves and our all are at stake."

The message which Pascal addressed to a sceptical age is re-echoed by Barth to this generation. He and Brunner would say of the philosophers of to-day what Pascal said of such men in his time. Because the influence



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of philosophy and modern science upon the theology taught in Colleges and Churches leads to an assumption of the inmost nature of man as divine, to a gradual ascent from the less of the divine in man to the more in God, man has almost obliterated the difference between the creature and the Creator, and the deep wound made in human nature by sin is thinly skinned over by such a developing optimism. These Swiss theologians, like George Fox, have "been baptized into a sense of all conditions" of men.

A few passages from Barth will indicate how deeply he has seen into the *malaise* of post-war Europe. "A perplexity extends over the whole range of human endeavour, present and future. It is a perplexity felt by man simply by virtue of his being a man, and has nothing to do with his being moral or immoral, spiritual or worldly, godly or ungodly. Man cannot escape his human-ness, and human-ness means limitation, finitude, creature-hood, separation from God." "The impenetrable muteness of so-called Nature that surrounds us, the chance and shadowy existence of every single thing in time, the ill-fortune and ill-fate of nations and individuals, the basic evil—death: thoughts of these things come to us, disquiet us (when in church), and crowd out all that might assure us that 'God is present.'" "Man desires to live . . . this stamps man as a *creature*. And the seal it uses is the fact that all men must *die*, one after another, without having seen the goal of history." "Man is a riddle and

nothing else, and his universe, be it ever so vividly seen and felt, is a question. God stands in contrast to man as the *impossible* in contrast to the possible, as *death* in contrast to life, as *eternity* in contrast to time." "Man is found in this world in prison. Man is his own sovereign: his oneness with God is in one way broken in pieces that no more permit a restoration to be thought of. Man's creatureliness is a fetter: his sin is his liability, his death is his fate. His world is a shapeless chaos moving to and fro of natural, psychical, and some other forces. His life is a pretence: that is our state. 'Is there a God?' A question very disconcerting truly! To seek to grasp this world in its oneness with God is, from God's viewpoint, either fearful religious arrogance or final insight into what is real 'yon-side' of birth and death" (*WG.*, pp. 189 f., 107, 166, 197; *Rom.*, p. 12 f.). Matthew Arnold's lines on Goethe can with more truth be applied to Barth:

> He look'd on Europe's dying hour
> Of fitful dream and feverish power:
> His eye plunged down the weltering strife,
> The turmoil of expiring life—
> He said: "The end is everywhere,
> Art still has truth, take refuge there."

Only for *Art*, Barth would say *God*.

The mention of Goethe brings us to the main criticism which is directed by both Barth and Brunner against æstheticism and idealistic philosophy. These are purely theoretical pursuits:

man is a spectator gazing on a spectacle; he is not an acting personage doing and making things. Such an attitude calls for no decision, there are no Caudine forks, no choice between Yes and No. Man is not set in question and challenged, as in ethical situations. Men do not feel and say then: "Ourselves and our all are at stake." That is what Barth means by saying we need *existential* thinking.

The brokenness of human life is presented from every angle by this school. This corresponds with what Calvinists of an earlier generation called 'law-work': the preparatory grounding of the need for a gospel owing to man's weakness and sinfulness. From the modern studies in biology a rich fund of material is available with which to bring man to his knees and cry out for a Redeemer. Listen to Brunner for a minute or two. "Life; we will live; even so we are *seeking* life—that signifies that we do not possess it. Some one objects, 'You would not be seeking life if life were not in you.' Is not that a confession that our existence is a contradiction? Not only the latest school of theology but life itself is 'dialectic,' for the very reason that in all its forms it nurses in its bosom this contradiction. We live and yet we do not live. We are living beings. We have part in the life of the world which biology describes for us. We possess vitality: we are a ripple on the stream of the *élan vital*: the wonderful yet mysterious force which we call life holds us in its grip. But we observe that this vitality means not

only life: it also means death. One does not have to be a sophist or cynic to call this life a desperate and vain struggle of the will-to-live against a must-die. Vain, I say, because in the end death remains victorious over life" (*TC.*, p. 45 f.).

When we pass to the higher life of mind in man, the same brokenness is manifest. One recalls the great passages in Pascal's *Pensées* on the limits of human thought. Permit this one to be cited: "The furthest stretch of reason is to know that there is an infinite number of things which utterly surpass it; and it must be very feeble indeed, if it reach not so far as to know this. . . . We know that there is an infinite: but we are ignorant of its nature. For instance, we know that numbers cannot be finite: there must therefore be an infinity in number. But we know not what it is. So you may certainly know there is a God, without comprehending what He is: and you ought not to conclude there is no God, because you cannot perfectly comprehend His nature." There man feels the limitations of his knowledge, both of nature, his own mind, and of God. And yet in religion all three subjects are brought together.

This is the point seen by Barth when he contemplates the seemingly impudent pretension of any man daring to speak for Almighty God. As a preacher he says: "I present assertions which openly seek to touch final truth, truth not only in existence but above all existence. I raise the claim to give the deepest answers on the deepest

questions of men. I set the hearer in the presence of an immense, inexplicable, insurmountable Thou that can be to the hearer both the nearest of all and the remotest of all, his friend as his foe, his life as his death. I venture it—no wonder the doubt of it, if I myself believe what I then say—I venture it as though the history of philosophy with its most satisfying or in any case most definite givenness were for me settled, as though I had assimilated and seen through all the wisdom of the world—the book of nature immeasurable in all dimensions and modes of consideration, the Sphinx of past history and of history to come, the marvel and the outrage of human civilization, the riddle of the individual, sexual need and social need and the never-ending crisis of abstract thought, guilt and fate, sickness and death—all these I have to master, put in brackets, and touch on them as I express words like creation, sin, redemption, certainty, kingdom of God, eternity " (*Dg.*, p. 50 f.).

Brunner has brought out, by psychological analysis, the great break that opens before man as he passes from contemplation of the world without and that of art to reflection on his ethical nature. In those realms his attitude was like that of watching a play, in this, the play turns to dead earnest. " Urgency and the constraint of becoming personal is the mark of the ethical. One can no longer play with the play when and so long as one likes ; he is both assailed and set still by the meaning or law : ' Do thou this now.' That meaning becomes earnest, for his whole

life is placed under subjection. There are no 'moral holidays'" (*MW.*, p. 91).

Brunner proceeds to show how man's whole existence is then claimed. An objective law has become his master and not his plaything, and by a strange paradox "freedom is only there and is given in measure as this objective necessity or truth is found" (*ibid.*, p. 92). "The ethical necessity is not æsthetic and hypothetical but categorical." This is the point Emerson put in his lines: "When duty whispers low, 'Thou must'; The youth replies: 'I can.'" Man has here the freedom to choose: he is not forced against his will—"like a turn-spit," as Kant said—for that is determinism, which denotes, so Brunner points out, "the sovereignty of causality and is the concept which distinguishes nature as such from spirit. Spirit is not the not-determined, but the *self*-determined . . . through the norm" or standard thus objectively presented and subjectively recognized (*ibid.*, p. 306). "For the will is ethical simply and solely through its share in the idea of the good: thereby, that man knows himself responsible to a higher posited Will, is drawn by It into account and claimed. The knowing about the claim from 'Yon-side' of us, the admission and recognition of this relation: this is the ethical. . . . Ethical thinking is only possible under the presupposition: There is good and evil. These are logical contradictions: between them is no bridge: they are opposites. But they are also 'existential' opposites: they claim obedience

or disobedience: the claim and the counterclaim as deed: in a word, deciding" (*ibid.*, p. 308 f.).

From that ethical foundation in human nature we pass to the greatest cleft that man knows, sin. Here we meet the weightiest message of the Barthian theology, as it lays the foundation for the work of the grace of God, the Creator and Redeemer. It will be convenient to take Brunner first, because he works up from the philosophical side to the fact of evil and sin, showing how the 'new Protestant theology,' from Schleiermacher's day, has minimized the meaning of sin, and led to the practical effacement of it in modern discussions. Barth comes to it from his terrific presentation of Paul's thought in Romans v.: a chapter without a parallel in recent studies of sin. Both writers acknowledge their indebtedness to Kierkegaard's *Sickness unto Death* as the most masterly psychological analysis of sin of the past hundred years. Mueller's *Christian Doctrine of Sin* they also regard as still a very valuable book.

The line Brunner takes can only be given brokenly, as he devotes several chapters to this central topic. Schopenhauer's view of the world as evil, Nietzsche's self-assertion of man's own ability to become a 'super-man' are regarded as instances of the modern mind's spirit of self-assertion against the opposition which existence itself presents: this opposition man seeks to deny and therefore the sin where that opposition is most acute. Sin is frankly irrational, and therefore can come into no system, for then sin could be rationalised. The dilemma is put by Brunner:

"Either man explains evil naturally, *i.e.*, as a product of nature: if so, then it does not exist as a moral fact. Or if it is recognized as a moral fact, then it is acknowledged to be inexplicable." He points out that the speculative systems of Spinoza, Leibniz, Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer have had no knowledge or understanding of evil: to recognize it would smash their systems all to pieces. Only Kant has taken evil and sin seriously: "Evil to him is not a negative or sensuality, as with Schleiermacher, nor inertness, as with Fichte, nor raw nature, nor the mere shortness of the finite in comparison with the infinite, but personal act, a happening in man's centre, his reason, the self-determination of the will against the law of God." It is 'radical evil': it is not a thing of moments: it affects the entire personality: "this evil is radical because it destroys the ground of all maxims," and as "intelligible fact its source remains for us unsearchable; for us there is no conceivable ground whence moral evil first could come to us" (citing Kant's *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*, pp. 35, 37, 40, 45). Yet even Kant did not carry through the implications of his view of evil, for his dictum that 'ought signifies can' falls before the fact that man knows the 'ought,' but 'can *not*' do it.

From the philosophers Brunner turns to the theologians. In the theory of Schleiermacher sin is only a defect, a 'not-yet'; with Ritschl the force of sin is weakened because he will not accept the corollary of Divine wrath, and

Ritschl leans to historical development, which is viewed as 'God-directed.' Brunner puts it: "The Kingdom-of-God-history is not a *re*-storation, *re*-generation, *re*-capitulation," and so "*re*-demption to Ritschl consists not in the removing of hindrances, of 'what-should-not-be,' but only a build-up of what is not yet existing." "Ritschl's taking over of the optimism of history from idealistic philosophy prevents a realistic serious knowledge of sin issuing; . . . because the gap is not seen man needs therefore no Mediator, in that view." Troeltsch has a definite, ethical judging of sin, but it is purely subjective and he, with his predecessors, 'has run off the rails' and 'flung to the scrap-heap' the Bible concept that sin is due to a 'fall,' and is 'original sin.'

Brunner characterizes the present thinking about sin as Pelagian. It only knows sins, not sin, *i.e.*, the evil as single actions of will, not as the destruction of man's existence: only as disturbances within an otherwise neutral or good existence (for present existence is set equal with the good creation of God). Hence the opposition is only acknowledged as subjective, on man's side: not as a two-sided objective: for the wrath of God is proscribed. And lastly, it knows evil only in reality as an individual thing, not as *solidaire* with the race. Such, in brief, is Brunner's analysis of modern treatments of what Kierkegaard called "the wound of human existence" (*M.*, cap. v., pp. 98-128).

Hitherto Brunner has been dealing with the

rift in human nature apart from Biblical theories of its origin. He has been preparing the way for the doctrine of 'crisis,' which gives its name to this mode of treating the problem of sin. He puts the Biblical-Reformers' view at length, as a better explanation of the meaning of sin. That we cannot detail here. But in a sentence he states where sin has its origin. "The origin of sin (or evil) is the defiance (by man), the grasping after the Divine right, the disputing of the Divine authority" (*MW.*, p. 224). The distinction between evil and sin he puts thus: "Evil may be said to be a static and neutral conception: it merely indicates that my will does not conform to law, perhaps to Divine law. Sin, however, is a conception connoting personal action, active personality. Sin means wrong relation to God" (*TC.*, p. 54). This is the advance made upon Kant's view of 'radical evil.' "The categorical imperative is not rightly personal, because it is not really imperative. The ethical law of the Bible is a different one from the human law: and in it is first fulfilled the idea of 'law.' The Biblical 'law' is what it is as the expression of the Divine Sovereign's will, the will of the Creator of the world. 'The Law' cannot be my Lord and I be its property, but God is my Lord and I am His property" (*M.*, p. 414 f., compressed). In a few sentences Brunner puts the gist of all the preceding discussion. "The categorical imperative is the command of God of absolute urgency, of absolute stringency. He who is

claimed by God knows nothing of 'Still-we-have-time' (*i.e.*, the evolutionary view), of 'Not-yet' (the growing perfection view), of 'Gradually,' of 'More-or-less' (the metaphysical view of sin), or a 'Not-now' (the moralist's view), it is a 'No-longer'" (*MW.*, p. 231; *TC.*, p. 55).

Space fails us to show how the brokenness of humanity is presented by Brunner as he surveys social life. Yet one passage may be permitted where he deals with the blindness of advocates of the gradual development by evolutionary process of human betterment; the unbroken continuity idea, viz.: "The process of evolution is a graded, unbroken, undisturbed ascent." "Of the fearful catastrophes of historical life—not to speak of the riddles of natural history, of the war of bacilli up to the ravaging catastrophes of the great periods of the world, of the trackless downfall of flourishing civilizations, of the destruction of entire races of men, of the periods of history where manhood fell back entirely into the completest chaos of barbarism, of the truly devilish work of destruction in the history of colonization, of the often repeated annihilation of gloriously educated people by brutal robbers—of all this these (optimists) seem to take no notice" (*MW.*, p. 291).

We now turn to Barth's interpretation of the brokenness of man, individually and racially. Barth uses two pairs of glasses when he looks out at man's brokenness. The one, as with Brunner, is through Kant's ethical doctrine of

the good. Kant taught that the only good was a good will: that it was autonomous, *i.e.*, it had an idea of the good and made it its own. Hence it was free, but to realize it completely it needed immortality as the range of its action. But Barth acutely says: "No such moral personality possessing a pure and autonomous and good will has ever stepped into our world." There is man's shortage. "Man, from the viewpoint of the *good*, is powerless." Thus "the problem of ethics, when it becomes our own, is the bond that relates us to God." There we meet Him in our conscience (*WG.*, pp. 154, 167 f.).

Barth then adjusts the other pair of glasses—the knowledge of God as given to us in the Bible, *i.e.*, the theological viewpoint. Only when man meets the Word of God does he get a true measure of his condition. As Barth says: "When I come to believe I see the problem of my being as a man. The Word of God sets to man as such his limits and thereby has defined him. It sets him especially in contrast with God, who (i) as the Creator, (ii) as the Holy and Merciful One, (iii) as He who is in Himself eternal, is simply and wholly not man and not as man is. Man is set before the problem of his existence. . . . Man exists as soul and body, spirit and nature, subject and object, inwardly and outwardly, directed to the synthesis of these two 'moments' (*i.e.*, *Anglice*, elements), but even lacking this synthesis. . . . Just the dualism, the annihilating convergence and the deadly divergence

of his existence, manifest in the mortality of his body over against the less consoling immortality of his soul, is the punishment of his sinfulness, in which he is known by God, in which he cannot stand before God—the mirror of his hostility towards his Sovereign" (*TK.*, p. 370).

The essence of sin is revolt against God. "Man's servile state towards God comes visibly to expression in the religious process (of the Old Testament). Man has held down 'the truth as a prisoner in disobedience': he has lost himself in himself: he has heard, and wants to hear the words, 'Ye shall be as Gods,' and he is himself what God should be to him. He confuses time with eternity, and therefore eternity with time. He attempts what he ought not to attempt: he stretches forth over the death-line set for him after the immortal, unknown God, robs Him of His own, shoves himself into His train and drags God into his own neighbourhood. He relates himself in monstrous ignoring of the distance to which it is impossible for him to relate himself, because God is *God*, and would be no longer God if such a self-relation of man to Him could take place. Man makes God a thing among other things in His world" (*Rom.*, p. 226). "Sin is a theft from God. This theft becomes perceptible by us as that daring stepping-across the death-line put before us, as that forgetting of God's invisibility, as that deifying of man and humanizing of God in the shape of erecting of the romantic immediacy—the Not-

God, the God of this world, by which we do not think that we must die " (*ibid.*, p. 146).

The effect of sin reaches beyond man : it affects the whole cosmos. " In us the cosmos is no longer a creation because we no longer know the Creator. What is in us is again reflected in what is outside of us. ' Ye shall be as Gods.' The world of men is the world of time and things, the world of the out-of-one-another, near-one-another, and towards-one-another : the world of contrasts of spirit and nature, ideality and materiality, soul and body : the world of spontaneity and givenness, of objectivations and principles, powers, thrones, princedoms, dominions. The world is man's fellow-prisoner " (*ibid.*, p. 147).

In this way Barth explains " broken humanity." The chief ' note ' of sin, like Satan's in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, is pride. That too was what Pascal assigned as the mark of sin in man. So too Dante diagnosed it. And against man's assertions of pride Barth sees the everlasting No of God. He sees too that the whole of this world is doomed to destruction—" the nation that forgets God shall perish." And what nation does not forget God, nowadays? And the individual knows, in Pascal's sad phrase, " Le dernier acte est sanglant, quelque belle que soit la comédie en tout le reste—on mourra seul." Man is put on trial : he is judged. Yet Barth sees " the awful rose of dawn." The ' crisis ' of man has a twofold meaning. " It is the supreme law of this world, the hint of the Lawgiver, who as

such is above His law: it is also the turning-point to the better; it is the limiting-fence *and* a way out: it is the end *and* a new start: it is No *and* Yes: the landmark of Divine wrath *and* the landmark of approaching Divine deliverance" (*Rom.*, p. 147).

# CHAPTER IX

## THE 'CRISIS'—GOD SPEAKS: MAN HEARS

THE closing words of the previous chapter give one of Barth's rare definitions of what he means by the word 'crisis.' It is a turning-point, and is a modern equivalent for the old-fashioned word 'conversion.' With this difference, however, that the turn may be to the 'left,' *i.e.*, to the wrong side, away from God, and not simply to the right, to God. Another definition of 'crisis' he gives as "a dialectic conception which not only allows but calls for its opposite—that this negation, which *removes* from human conduct all false value, may *restore* to it new value, may return to it its original value—that the question may be its own *answer*, and the argument against man be the argument *for* him" (*WG.*, p. 151). To this dialectical use of the term we shall return later, when discussing Barth's methods of thought: we place it here so that the various significations of this term may be grouped together. Brunner frequently uses the word and also with various nuances. Thus, in *TC.*, he gives it a double meaning: "It signifies the climax of an illness, and also a turning-point of an enterprise or a movement" (p. 1). The logical nuance he puts thus: "Crisis,

the principle of reverential thinking, of thinking that does not overlook the qualitative difference, means, in German, separation and judgment" (*MW.*, p. 296). The term is used in philosophy to denote the "coming of the mind to itself," and Brunner uses it in the Pauline sense of the "awakening to moral consciousness" under the stimulus and correction of the Law (*cf.* Rom. vii.). Thus the word covers the physical 'turn' of an illness, the new direction of a movement, the logical discrimination between ideas, the moral decision in ethical thinking—this an act of will—and the claim of God through His Word addressed to man. All these nuances must be kept in mind when the word occurs.

Bultmann puts the central meaning most clearly in his book, *Jesus*. He shows that in the teaching of Jesus there is missing the modern emphasis on human ideals, such as the development of human faculties, the notion of something full of worth in man as such, capacity to 'realize his personality.' Bultmann says:—"In opposition thereto the worth of man for Jesus is defined not by any given human quality or the content of his soul-life, but only by how a man decides in the Here and Now of his existence. Jesus looks on man as standing in the crisis in his Here and Now, through his free act man has the possibility of deciding (*Entscheidung* = Crisis). This alone that the man does gives him his value. And this situation of crisis proceeds or emerges for man in that the future of God's kingdom concerns him." "The

understanding of God's claims . . . arises from the situation of decision in God's presence, in which a man is placed. . . . This moment of decision contains all that is necessary for deciding, inasmuch as the whole of existence is at stake . . . the pose of a spectator is removed: *now* it avails to know what to do and what to drop, and there is no standard given out of the past or out of the universal. That is what crisis, decision, means" (*op. cit.*, pp. 50 ff., 82 f.). The effect of the crisis is seen thus: "The relation of man in his Now decides concerning his future for the sake of God's claim. This claim is not play but seriousness: he who mistakes this claim, the future for him is judgment, for him God is the far God. Thereby he is another than he was before; he stands as a sinner before God. So far as he is a sinner God is for him the far God. And directly because God is the near God the man who hears not His claim is a sinner. For just because He is the near God, there is no neutrality over against Him, no distance in which His claim holds no longer" (*ibid.*, p. 180 f.).

Bultmann's description of 'crisis' is valuable because it enables us to see the point where the transcendent God and broken humanity—the themes of the previous two chapters—meet. The 'far' God has become 'near,' immanent, in the conscience of man because He has taken the initiative and brought His claim, as Creator, Sovereign, God, to bear on man. And the

brokenness of humanity is most felt when the holy God thus addresses it: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Brunner shows how this brokenness, this dualism which revelation makes plain, is sharper than any other: than that of genuine ethical idealism. For in this latter we have the contrast of nature and spirit, of sensual and rational, *a priori* and empiricism, good and evil. "Here," he says, "in Christianity the rent, the disharmony, the non-equilibrium is sharpest because the fissure runs through the midst of the personality and likewise through the midst of humanity. Every metaphysical dualism merely halves. . . . Christian dualism rips asunder without separating. The rent runs through the highest, the innermost, and through every one: it embraces each and all. Alongside this dualism of sin ('original sin,' 'original guilt') and God's holiness, every other dualism is, so to speak, harmless, veiled monism. In contrast to the opposites, Hell Heaven, wrath of God reconciliation, fall-into-sin deliverance, all other opposites seem to be mere contrasts, conditioning harmony" (*MW.*, p. 333 f.). We stand before the great Either—Or: this is the pivot, so to speak, upon which the whole of the Barthian theology turns. And this is the crucial point where it breaks across all current thinking about the relation between God and man. In the literal as well as the Biblical sense of the words, it is a *theologia crucis*.

The whole force of Barth's mind, as he wrote his Romans Commentary, was bent upon driving

this point of the crisis of man home to men. It must be confessed that at times he drove it so hard that he verged upon an absolute dualism. He did not stay to qualify his antitheses: he was pulling an alarm bell: Spengler was writing of "The Decline of the West": Troeltsch's works were being collected, and his relativism and lack of an absolute was apparent in his book, *Historismus und seine Probleme* (Bde. III.: Gesam. Schrift, 1922). Spengler saw no God, nor purpose in the decline of present-day civilization: blind fate ruled the shadowed destinies of men. Otto had brought forward his emphasis on the Irrational in religion some years before, and the effect of his doctrines of the *tremendum*, *mysterium*, and *majestas*, stimulated Barth's inherited doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty. All these influences, as well as the catastrophe of the war for the German peoples, must be allowed for when one reads the Romans Letter. Since then Barth has moved on. His Prefaces inform us that he has put into the background much that once was prominent, and things in the rear have come into the forefront. It is to Brunner one must look for the working out of the problems of transcendence which Barth has left seething in the minds of theologians and philosophers. Barth, now that he is a Professor, has been busy with his central theme: the Doctrine of the Word of God. He is chiefly occupied with working out a Dogmatik from the standpoint of preachers of the Word, and, accordingly, his treatment of the problems of Crisis is secondary to his

purpose. But Brunner keeps the doctrine of Crisis to the front, and his book, *M.*, is packed with useful discussions of the difficulties such a doctrine leaves for the mind. Gogarten too is busy on the philosophical side, but him we must leave out of our survey. We have quite enough to do within our space to extricate and interpret Barth and Brunner.

One problem that issues from the doctrine of Crisis is how the eternal breaks into time; how the transcendent becomes immanent. Barth has almost ceased now to use Otto's phrase, "The Altogether Other," as designation of the Absolute. The Sovereignty of God, as Biblically given and developed in the Reformers' Theology, takes its place. Brunner frankly declares that no God worth having can be found along either the idealistic speculative way or the mystic's "sinking into the Abyss." "The God of thought, of mysticism, of morality is the God of Aristotle, 'Himself unmoved, yet moving all.' The truth of this God is 'standing' truth. The deepest ground of the world, of the 'I,' of the soul, the Law of the Law is not moved. The Idea '*is*.' The God of moral law is, as identical with the law, as stiff as the law. To say out anything of a movement of the Absolute is an intolerable contradiction, as the Neoplatonists of all time have very well known. For moving is striving, and striving is seeking something not possessed, therefore imperfection" (*M.*, p. 255). On all these ways nothing comes to man 'in the deeps' from which he cannot ascend. Along the

Kantian dualistic way there is a gleam of hope; the ethical consciousness of man knows something of a categorical imperative: only it is an abstraction and not a Person. Here the Christian doctrine, which is the Biblical one, can find some footing for any approach, any self-moving of God to man. Man feels that his 'moral duties are commands.' A command is a form of speech and implies an answer. First the address, then the reply.

"What makes the claim (Ger. *Anspruch*), the ethical, grips me personally and makes me for the first time a person. Humanly speaking, I am an 'I' first of all that through that address or claim which I receive: I am the subject answering back (Ger. *verantwortliche*; we have no exact English equivalents—R. B. H.). Speech has begun: *re*-ply implies *ap*-plied speech. Lightning out of eternity flashes into time and the place where it strikes is called the Moment. The perception becomes painful, the word becomes an unheard-of stringency: conscience is the boundary-fence of immanence" (*ibid.*, p. 94). Brunner frankly admits that philosophy cannot solve the problem of how the eternal can come into time. "It is the fixed ground of all philosophy that the Absolute cannot move itself, for then it would not be the Absolute: mysticism and ethical rationalism express the same objection: the deepest ground is not moved. The Law of Law does not change. In fact the self-moving of God stands in contradiction to the idea of the Absolute, whether construed logically

or ethically. Therefore man has no hope for his need from there. There is no Living God, no God of Love to be known on those conditions." Therefore to the one place where a movement of God is spoken of, the Bible, we must turn. "That the Absolute God is also the Coming One, the Hidden God the Revealer, the God of inexorable Law, the Forgiving One; this fundamental contradiction in man's thoughts of God which is expressed in the central doctrines of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, and of Reconciliation; this certainly is the characteristic of the Biblical thought of God. As idea this thought is most nonsensical. But it makes no claim to be idea: it is based on the revelation of God Himself" (*M.*, p. 256).

On familiar lines Brunner shows that the conception of the Trinity gives opportunity for the inward self-movement of God which the idea of thought and love requires, viz., an object upon which to move and spend itself: the Father loves the Son and the Son the Father. "This love is God's essence and does not come into being first in relation to the world, but reveals itself as God's essence to the world: therefore the world is not the necessary correlate of God, but the contingent creation of His will. In the Son the Father loves the world as He has created it in Him, the Logos. The Son, the Logos, is God as to His world-relationship and communicativeness, the principle of creation, of revelation, and of redemption. In the Son as the Son God is the self-moving God, who moves Himself forth to

the world." "The Bible is the book in which the strange assertion is the ever-recurring theme, that God who has created the world and fills all things, holds all things in His hand, the All-present and Almighty—*comes*. The coming of God is the peculiar theme of this book, and *only* this book. . . . Revelation is God's coming in the Word; kingdom of God, redemption, end-of-time, Messianic-time is God's coming 'in power'" (*ibid.*, p. 253 f.).

There is the background upon which all the speaking of God to man is set forth. At the point where the individual man becomes aware of that 'coming,' the 'Place,' as these writers call it, there is the direct speech of God heard: "Thou art the man." That 'place' is conscience. Barth holds the same view. "Conscience is the only place between heaven and earth in which God's righteousness is manifest": "Conscience is the perfect interpreter of life, what it tells us is no question, no riddle, no problem, but a fact—the deepest, innermost, surest fact of life: God is righteous" (*WG.*, p. 10 f.).

In an acute discussion Brunner argues that only as the 'word' comes to man does he become human, as distinguished from the animals, and personal. "The word is the ground-fact of human existence that makes it human. Not to the reason but to the word belongs this primary place. . . . The word is more than reason because in the word it comes to expression that man has reason not as his own possession but as a present, a gift. . . . The nearest

approach to the 'word' is the 'sense.' What has no sense is meaningless and thereby non-human. But 'sense' (meaning) is connexion . . . the mental unity in the manifold which is not 'given' but is there by an act of connective construction, the synthetic act of the mind. . . . Meaning is only there where a mind grasping sense traces those connecting lines which bind the single things into a whole, the elements of statements into a complete meaning, separate facts into a connexion of facts or law. Only through 'after-thinking' (Ger. *Nachdenken*) does it know." "Meaning is the bracket which holds all mental things together. The meaning is objective: bethinking and intending, this acting-under-the-understanding and acting-from-the-conviction (Ger. *Sinn*), the subjective. By this reaching-for-the-sense, existence becomes humanly-spiritual."

Brunner proceeds to show how by thought, especially in the existential ethical sphere, man is related to God, and a basis given for revelation. "Spirit is positing meaning: this is the thing common to the Divine and human spirit. That man can posit sense is his participation in the Divine spirit, the *imago Dei*. That is the *pensée* on which Pascal rests the grandeur of man, that which idealism since Plato knows as the essence of humanity, the divine worth of man and the origin of his freedom. . . . In himself man has a passage to the highest heights and the deepest depths." Such is the view of the Greek idealist. But Brunner rejoins: "There is no

speech here, no address to man, no real word."

"But reason as perceiving sense, Logos as real word, knowing of God as impartation from God: this characterizes man as a finite creature. But by this first of all, that he is directed to hearing, man recognizes the dividing-fence between himself and the Creator, man recognizes his 'being-not-God.' . . . The 'word' is the fact which makes two things equally clear, and grounds them: that we as men are spiritual beings, but are finite beings.' In the ethical falls the crisis, for the ethical is in the highest measure dualistic. . . . The freedom and spirituality of man rests simply and alone in his ability to perceive that he understands the 'word,' can accept or reject it. The physical individuality of man is not differentiated essentially from the animal, nor his psychological self either. He is only man first through his hearing the summons from eternity. That truth first creates man's personality. Our I is grounded in the Divine 'Thou-speech,' it is the *re*-ply (Ger. *Antwort*) to this calling. Thou art man as a person addressed, as the second person, and a meaning of existence can only be asserted within the manifest senselessness of life by thy receiving the meaning which, in contradiction to all experience, thou canst only believe. Therefore on the 'word' hangs nothing less than all" (*MW.*, pp. 88-97, compressed).

Brunner goes on to explain how this analysis of the process of thought enables us to grasp

the two degenerate forms of understanding mental processes, intellectualism and romantic anti-intellectualism, where they go wrong. The former is the confusion of the divine and the human words, either in the form of dogmatism, orthodoxy, which makes the divine manifestation into a human doctrine, or in the shape of rationalism, by which truth is construed as function of human nature. We shall not pursue this line of thought beyond saying that Brunner finds the corrective for the theological dilettantism which regards such truth as something merely to admire, by getting back to 'existential' thinking again. "It is forgotten that that truth comes up against 'me'—this individual, concrete man—claims 'me.' Then comes the serious personal response: the question of truth becomes a burning one, life's interests, deciding concerning my being or not-being. The ice of intellectualism is broken: it deals now with the meaning of my existence. 'Thou art the man,' 'I have called thee by name'; this is divine truth and appellative, calling. Here knowing means, God speaks: man hears: hears as the accused hears the speech of the judge who decides concerning life and death" (p. 100 f.).

In this desperate situation faith arises. "Faith is born in the crisis of the ethical. It is the spark that leaps forth under the hammer of God's word, the Divine claim—if it comes to faith. It is not at all meant that faith originates from the ethical as a postulate of ethics. Faith originates

out of the Divine promise and out of nothing else: but he alone understands this promise who knows what ethical willing and duty mean. It is related all through to doing, and accordingly faith must also be *done*." And so one either responds to the 'claim,' or refuses it. Obedience or disobedience indicates the attitude of the will when confronting the Either-Or (*MW.*, p. 167 f.).

This summary of Brunner's close and cogent reasoning has been given to prepare the way to the next chapter and because on it the difficult part of the Barthian theology, the dialectical mode of thinking, rests. This chapter has already reached its limits, and several questions which arise can only be dealt with briefly. Critics have pointed out that in this emphasis upon the 'brokenness' between man and God, the Barthians dispense with any general revelation in natural history and in the human spirit. To that objection Brunner replies that this dialectical thinking about faith's origin is grounded in the fact that man bears in himself an image of God, but spoiled, and that originally the creation was good and a creation revealing God. That general revelation has been broken, and the need for a new revelation has arisen through man's fall. "Man," says Brunner, "cannot believe in Christian fashion in the unique revelation and in the Mediator without believing in a general revelation of God in the creation, in history and especially in the conscience" (*M.*, p. 12, n. 2, f.). But "apart from this special revelation God is only impersonally known. For He is

known on the ground of idea, from out of the world, out of the human spirit, from what God imparted Himself to the world at the Creation. But that is not His own Name, 'His own inmost Self.' This is but the Creator God and not to be known from out of what He created; such is but a Demiurge: the Universal, the 'necessary being,' the ground of the world and the soul, the All of the Mystics, but not the Living God of faith, the Personal God" (*ibid.*, p. 236 f.).

The relation of the special revelation in the Logos to the general revelation is another question. Brunner meets it thus: "There is only one Logos who is only recognizable in Christ. But this Logos is the principle of all knowledge, and above all the kernel of truth in all religions. But on this all hangs: the order in succession, viz., Whether we say, 'Christ is the truth of all philosophy and religion,' or 'All that is true in philosophy and religion is Christ.' In the latter case the principle becomes subordinate and the Christ-revelation becomes merely one individual expression of general truth, concretion of the idea. By this the idea triumphs over the revelation, the neuter is victor over the personality . . . and so the person of Jesus as bearer of this idea is made separable from it." And so "Plato is not to explain John's use of the Logos, but conversely, the Logos of John, the Personal Logos, explains Plato" (*M.*, p. 371 f.).

But the important thing is not the abstract questions, rather it is, What does God say to man when He speaks? In a beautiful section

of the *Dg.* Barth sets forth the real state of man on earth, as a *viator* whose "life is like a wanderer's journey in the night," far from his home, God. He leads up to the questions man sets to himself; the relation of the solitary to society, of life and what lies beyond, of good and evil, of the war 'twixt flesh and spirit, of man and the Unseen Maker, the question of existence which then arises. "He has not merely the question of his self-contradiction: he does not merely think it, he *is* it, and this is the real dialectic of life that he has not in the first place to doubt and discuss, but he has to *live*." The answer to man's question has already been given, prior to the question: it is in God's word. This answer is the meaning of the question and its presupposition: in it the question had its ground. The Word is to the man in his brokenness; and puts him in crisis, at a turning-point. The man, as a hearer, is still a *viator*: he feels his need, his guilt. "God's word is the answer to this question of man. It is the word from 'home' to the wayfarer, saying to him that the way home stands open. God Himself it is who comes and draws near to man. Through and through, that coming is Yes to man. It says Yes to him: that is fellowship; it calls him: that is love. It speaks truth: that is power. And it is the word of the Sovereign. God is above the contradiction in which we are. God is the Creator at the beginning and the Redeemer at the end, as both the Lord of the peace which we have not and which He Himself,

as the Reconciler, establishes in between. Just as the Reconciler He speaks to the *viator* His word, reminding him of the creation, promising him redemption, granting him grace to think on his creation, to hope for his redemption, giving him grace to believe and to live in faith. This is the uplifting and new-setting of the subject man by the real answer to the question of existence" (Sec. 6, 2; pp. 67-76).

> God may have other Words for other worlds,
> But for this world, His Word is Christ.

Something of what Christ means will take up the next chapter.

# CHAPTER X

## THE GOD-MAN

### § i. The Person

"Only he who can say Jesus Christ, *i.e.*, God in the flesh, God and man, in one, but in one *true* word, he alone can plume himself on being *no* dialectical theologian," says Barth (*TK.*, p. 321). "In the name Jesus Christ two worlds meet and touch; two levels or planes divide, one known, the other unknown. The one was created by God, but is fallen from its original union with God and therefore is the world needing to be redeemed . . . the world of flesh, of men, time and things. This known plane was cut into by another, the unknown world of the Father . . . the world of the original creation and final redemption. . . . The point of intersection of the two planes is Jesus of Nazareth . . . the Jesus of history, born of David according to the flesh. Jesus as historic determination (Ger. *Bestimmung*) signifies the point of fracture between the world known to us and the unknown world. . . . Jesus as the Christ is to us the unknown plane which cuts, perpendicularly through from above, that plane known to us. . . . Jesus as the Christ can only be understood within historical phenomena

as a problem, as 'myth.' Jesus as the Christ brings the world of the Father, of whom, within historical phenomena, we shall and do know nothing. The resurrection from the dead is the turn, the insertion of that point from above and the answering understanding from below. The resurrection is the revealing, the disclosing of Jesus as the Christ, the manifestation of God and knowing of God in Him. . . . In the resurrection the new world of the Holy Ghost touches the old world of the flesh; but it touches it as the tangent of a circle without its being touched, and just because it does not touch it, it touches and limits it as new world" (*Rom.*, p. 5 f.).

The above passage exhibits the characteristic features of what may be called a theology. In the God-man, Jesus Christ, we have *the re*-solution of the problems raised to the mind by the transcendence of God, the brokenness of humanity, the crisis when the 'unknown God' comes within the ken of man's awakening conscience, and evokes the emotions which range from the utter fright of the creature before his Creator, the feeble 'thinking reed' of a human before the world's Governor, up to the adoration and reverence of the saint. The gap between man and God is that between utter incommensurables. In the God-man the two are joined.

It is the mark of this kind of theology, in contrast to the usual method of procedure followed for almost a century now, to start from above, from the God-side, and work down to man. Barth's line of approach is exactly

that of a Scots thinker, 'Rabbi' Duncan, as given in his talks with Dr W. Knight in *Colloquia Peripatetica.* "The tendency of all my thinking is not to look upwards from man to God, but downwards from God to man." Knight's rejoinder: "But as we are not divine, how do you get *up* in the first instance?" was met with the remark: "I cannot tell you; *only, I am up.* . . . I must *start* from theology" (p. 10 f.). So Barth starts from the revelation contained in Scripture.

The connexion of the two terms, God-man, is itself, as Barth says, "the original paradox of all." Elsewhere he says: "For every abstract consideration of the being of God and of man, of divine and human existence, the statement of the Incarnation of God is an absurd, a logical, indeed, an ethical and religious impossibility. For 'God' and 'man,' set abstractly in contrast, by one who knows what is said with these two words, signifies an irreversible Near-one-another, indeed, Separate, indeed, Opposite. Only in recognition of an act of God the Lord, an act whose paradoxical character cannot be overlooked and must not be forgotten, is that statement possible" (*Dg.*, p. 261). He goes on to say that the only basis for our accepting what thought cannot construe is "that it pleased God to do it for our redemption."

Barth accepts the view of the theologians of the Reformed Church, that Jesus had no proper human personality, but that the Logos took the place of the human person. By this construction

Jesus, the human form, was the Incarnate Logos, and all that is predicated of the Logos prior to the birth at Bethlehem, viz., that by 'the Logos' or Wisdom, the world was created, that the "Word of the Lord" in the Old Testament prophets signified, as in John's Gospel, "The Word with God who was God," is thus the Divine, God, in the man Jesus. Therefore Barth discards the *kenosis* doctrine, as implying a 'self-emptying' of deity. "The *kenosis* consists not in a negation, but in the positive, that He took to Himself, to His own existence which is His own from everlasting to everlasting—He added to Himself, received in Himself, as the Eternal Word of the Father—He united with Himself human existence in time. (He cites Bengel, on John i. 14)—'What He was before did not cease to be, and He was made what He was not before,' (and a German hymn which runs, in paraphrase) :—

> 'Whom all the worlds did ne'er enclose,
> On Mary's bosom found repose' "—(*Dg.*, p. 260).

Barth is so anxious that nothing of man's taint *in this fallen world* should attach to Jesus that he lands himself into difficulties in attempting to construe His personality. The view of the Logos as constituting the personality of Jesus is a fixed idea with him. It was one of the counts against Herrmann's Christology which he vigorously attacked in 1925. Herrmann had quoted Luther's words, "In the power of the man Jesus as such we grasp God Himself working

on us." Barth replies: "We never at all grasp God in the power of the man Jesus as such. . . . It must be the divinely-working, it must be the humanly-working, but it must from the start be the divinely-humanly working. Because He is the incarnate *Logos of God*, not in him in himself, do we grasp God in the man Jesus. Certainly in the *man* Jesus, viz., in the 'person' of Jesus, but that is just it, that the 'person' of Jesus is the Logos, that apart from the Logos there is not in general a 'person' of Jesus" (*TK.*, p. 275). Barth's reason for thus emphasizing the Logos as constituting the personality of Jesus is to avoid the Lutheran view that the human nature, as finite, is yet capable of becoming divine. He is true to the Reformed Church axiom, "the finite is incapable of the divine," because human nature now, since the Fall, is fallen from God.

It is this motive which leads Barth to a peculiar view of the birth of Jesus, a view which Brunner does not accept. In seeking an explanation for the absence of human paternity in our Lord's conception, Barth advances the theory that: "The ordinary man gains his name, state, right, place in history, his character as this and this real person, not merely as an individual but as *this* real individual from his *father*. His being begotten by his father, not his being conceived and born through his mother, is the earthly-temporal copy of his being created by God by which he has substance, reality. . . . Adam was created after the image of God:

through *him* came sin into the world: a second Adam must come from heaven for the renewing of mankind: but if so, then the first Adam, the 'old' Adam and his sons have nothing to do with it. *Their* reproduction, their doing cannot create this end and this beginning (of a new humanity). This history is not man's history, not man's act. . . . Were Christ Adam's son He would be a sinner as all other men are. Since then he (Adam) was eliminated, sin is eliminated. . . . Not a second creation of another mankind, but the new creation of the same man is dealt with by the coming of the Second Adam." Barth makes out that man as sinner is the offspring of Adam, but only as creature is he Eve's son. Thus Jesus escaped the sin-inheritance by the elimination of male paternity, but could take creatureliness by being born of a woman, a virgin. Sounder is his emphasis on the fact that this is God's great wonder, comparable to His making the world out of nothing (*Dg.*, p. 278 f.). Of the former opinion, Professor Althaus, of Erlangen—a sympathiser with the Barthian School—justly said, "It is more than marvellous: this Male-female theology is hardly Biblical"!!

Brunner is in agreement with Barth as to the Logos taking the place of human personality in Jesus, or, put in Brunner's way, "Jesus Christ took over human nature but not a human person: Jesus Christ was no human person" (*M.*, p. 283). The reason for this view, like that of Barth's interpretation of the Birth of a Virgin, is to guard Jesus, in His human

nature, from the consequences of Adam's Fall, 'original sin,' as a warp at the basis of all human nature. This is a point that is likely to come up in the near future in Christological discussions. From the side of non-Christians the question as to whether Jesus was sinless is being raised. Claude Montefiore in England, Klausner in New York, have criticized the doctrine that the moral character was perfect. Bertrand Russell has gone so far as to say that Buddha and Socrates have points to score as against Jesus. Middleton Murry also has raised the same criticism, and thinks Jesus was deceived in trusting God as His Father. From the Christian side the basis from which Barth and Brunner work, viz., the Genesis story of the Fall, has been impugned by many. Professor John Baillie of Canada, in his book, *The Place of Jesus Christ in Modern Christianity*, thinks that the fellowship of man with God is not bound up with the Christian 'myth' of the Fall and redemption, nor yet with the interpretation of Christ's Person at Chalcedon. And in Germany Professor Althaus, when criticizing Brunner's *M.*, said: "I think that in the next few years we shall have to withdraw, with regret, much which under the name of 'Personality of Christ' is now the vogue" (*Theologische-Literaturzeitung*, 1929, coll. 496 f.).

In view of such opinions it seems right to give Brunner's views at some length, especially as in recent discussions of Christology in Britain the distinctive positions of the Reformed and

Lutheran theologians of to-day secure no mention.[1]

Brunner says: "It is the mystery of the Person of Jesus Christ that in the 'place' where we have sinful person, He has, or rather is, the Divine Logos-person. For 'person' is just what one cannot have, but only be. Christ has indeed received human nature but not human person. He has indeed taken over temptableness—the possibility of sin bound up with historical personality—but not the 'person' corrupted by original sin, *i.e.*, the necessity to fall into temptation." He draws a distinction between personality and person. Jesus has 'historical personality,' in the full sense of the word, that belongs to all human nature. But the 'person' as the 'mystery of man' is sin. "Every man has a mystery of person that is not at all identical with his historical personality, with the individual mintage seizable by the historian or biographer. This person lies behind all historical-psychological perception, and even behind self-perception. We men all carry masks, see one another and ourselves through masks: we are a mystery to one another and to ourselves . . . and not merely mystery in the sense of individuality: that is mystery of nature, not of our person—our creature-mystery which separates and will eternally separate us from one another. This is not meant, but the mystery of the person as account-

[1] *The Lord of Life*, S.C.M., gives a good survey of British theologians, but present-day Germans seem unknown.

able being. For being a person is accountable being. Our mystery is the inmost point of our factual existence, our self-determination, our not-given but self-determined Ego. . . . Here alone sin has its seat; sin in the total sense, sin which is the origin of all sins, which we cannot psychologically perceive, which lies behind all historical sins, the Fall. . . . That is our mystery before which we are afraid because we truly do not fathom it, but its character we guess. We cannot unmask ourselves because we are no longer true enough to be able. But there is one place or point where we are unmasked: in front of Christ, in faith. There we see the mystery of *our* person; there alone where we know the mystery of *His* person as God's Son. . . . The mystery of our person is that we are created by God after His image, in His Word, and that we are fallen from God, out of His Word" (*M.*, p. 283 f.). Elsewhere he puts it thus: "He who exists as man exists as a sinner. To assert the sinlessness of one Man and still to know what sin is, is to assert His non-humanness. Only the God-man can be the sinless man. . . . He is the only one made known to humanity in God's presence . . . who brings us the proof that He stands 'Yon-side' of the cleft which separates us from God and determines our present humanness. He is, therefore, the Man of God's good pleasure, the Original Man, untouched by the Fall, by the cleavage: the Holy Man, the Second Adam, in whom human nature is restored

into conformity to the Divine creation" (*ibid.*, 450 f.).

So much for the relation of the two 'Adams' and Christ's freedom from sin. In a footnote (*M.*, p. 307 f.) Brunner puts succinctly the difference between the Lutheran and Reformed Church construction of the two natures of the God-man. "The difference is over the relation between the human and divine nature of Christ. Common is the deciding thing, the Chalcedonian formula—the two natures are not confused and are still united in the one Person. But now the Lutheran teaches the *communicatio idiomatum*, *i.e.*, the encroaching of the natures in an historical subject, Jesus Christ: the Reformers teach a non-encroachment. We of the Reformed Church believe thus: So far as Jesus Christ is *knowable historically*, so far as He belongs to the human sphere, He is man. His Godhead is His personal mystery, that as such enters not into the historical sphere."

In view of the recent attempt to construct a "Christology in Modern Terms" (vide *Lord of Life*, pp. 167-231) in Britain, it is useful to put Brunner's points against similar efforts in Germany. "The chief objection against the 'doctrine of the natures' is the metaphysical contraction. The Gospel deals with the will of God, Church Christology now turns round questions and magnitudes of being, metaphysical questions which indeed satisfy an intellectual need, but have nothing to do with the faith-interests of Christians. . . . The question

as to Who Christ is? is displaced by that, How He is? The question as to the being of Christ has to be displaced by that as to His historical manifestation. Thus one leaves the ground of revelation for that of inner-historical ethical-religious phenomena, and for the concept of revelation is substituted the modern concept of concretizing of the idea, *i.e.*, of the symbol (cf. *Lord of Life*, p. 221, n. 1; A. N. Whitehead, *Symbolism*). This conceals the much more fundamental opposition according to Biblical Christian interpretation of revelation in general. The basal opposition of Christian faith: Creator *v.* creature, sinful creaturehood *v.* divine world of redemption, this age *v.* coming age, for the bridging over of which the Biblical Christian witness of faith is concerned, is exchanged for a relative opposition, that of nature and ethical spirit, of being and value" (*M.*, p. 206 f.).

It would be interesting to see what Brunner and Barth had to say, if they knew our recent literature on the doctrine of the natures. Such phrases as "the divinity of man," "we are powerless to imitate a celestial invader" and the recourse to the "subliminal consciousness," as given in *Lord of Life* (pp. 176, 182), would be *anathema*.

## § ii. As Revealer

Hitherto we have been dealing with the Person in two natures, and have only indirectly touched upon the work of Christ as part of the message of these theologians. We have been,

as it were, examining the titles, the diplomas, of the Great Physician, and neglecting the open sores of mankind that He came to heal. In two words the work is expressed: To reveal God to mankind who knew Him not: to reconcile sinful man to His Maker, His Father. That twofold work was accomplished by virtue of Christ being the *God*-man. The background of the view of God is the doctrine of the Trinity, as adumbrated in Scripture, fully drawn out in the creeds of the one undivided Church. These thinkers proceed along the customary lines, familiar to students of theology, and scarcely require elaboration here.

Valuable discussions are given by both Barth and Brunner on the work of revelation. This is Barth's main theme in his *Dg.*: the atoning, reconciling work is but lightly touched upon. Brunner, however, devotes a large section of *M.* to this latter, and when dealing with that part we shall again have recourse to that book. But both have a doctrine of the "hidden God" in revelation, which may seem strange to British ears. Both also are combating the modern 'liberal' views which would make Christ to be a genius, a prophet, the greatest of all prophets, but not the final revealer of God to men. Barth's thesis on the Incarnation runs thus: "God's revelation to men becomes possible by God thus and not otherwise, that God's Son or Word becomes man, and indeed man in the same sense as we all are men, therefore flesh, *i.e.*, bearer of our opposition to God and to ourselves" (Sec. 14).

The thesis is drawn out in all its contents in the scholastic manner, as Dorner and Schleiermacher present their expositions. We have only space to summarize the course of thought. "Only God, the Triune God, God alone, must be He whose revealing shall be worthy of the name of God. What were less or something else would not be God, God's revelation." Barth points out that in this joint work of the Trinity in revelation no one can remain standing in a one-sided emphasizing of God's transcendence; "the so-called immanence of God cannot be more fundamentally expressed than as it appears in the Church doctrine of the Son or Word of God: whether transcendent or immanent God remains absolutely God. But man cannot meet God as God: 'No man shall see Me and live.'" Therefore He must meet man as man, and the deity as such must be hidden. "The man in whom God's Word (as Person) discloses Himself must be entirely man." A theophany, not being man, would not reveal God. Nor would a super-man, an angel, a spirit, who might give a partial revelation of God, be intelligible. "To meet man God must be entirely and really man and nothing else." And yet—such is the paradox of revelation—God must be also entirely in His revelation. Hence the Son, as God, as the Word, becomes man. "'The Word became flesh' is even stronger than if the verse ran, 'became man.' Flesh is the name of Adam who stands under the curse of the Fall, in opposition to God

and with himself, the fallen, corrupted human nature, soon to be sanctified and to be redeemed" (*Dg.*, pp. 214-222).

More interesting is Brunner's examination of the relation of the prophet, especially in the Old Testament, to the 'Word' of God which he is commissioned to proclaim. He points out that modern theological thinking has not seriously studied prophecy. One regrets that the fine work of the late A. B. Davidson is unknown to Brunner (*vide* art. Hastings, *D.B.*, *sub voce*). Brunner says the tendency is to confuse the prophet with the religious genius, that is, with a maximum of religious humanity. He quotes Weinel as saying, "What genius is in the realm of art that the prophet is in the realm of religion and morality" (*M.*, p. 190, n. 1). To which he retorts, "That means the prophet is the discoverer of general truth, as Euclid was in mathematics." But the Bible view of a prophet is of one speaking for God with authority: speaking not a general truth hitherto not known, but a truth man can *not* find, "because it is, as to content, a divine mystery beyond human possibility. It has a new quality, and is contrary to what historical life produces. The word of genius has no authority in the strict sense of the word; in a hundred years it becomes a commonplace." But the Old Testament prophet points to another, more than himself, who is to come, even as Jesus points *back* to the prophets as standing behind Him. The prophet stands between God and men with a truth received from God: as God's

mouth where the word was placed, the organ through which God causes His word to be heard in the world. But Jesus is more than a 'go-between,' a middle-man bearing a message. The prophet *has* a message: Jesus *is* the message. What He is is ever more than what He says, and the Person and the 'Word' are one. The prophet stands under the Word, as other men do. But Jesus stands *over* His word: the former has merely delegated authority to speak, and when the message has been delivered returns to normal life again. But Jesus has authority in Himself: it is *in* Himself, and not merely *through* Himself. "He is the Word in whom God gives Himself to us personally, because in Him personally God is present as the bridge over the chasm between Himself and us: He is the Mediator" (*M.*, pp. 188-201, condensed).

On the relation to general revelation of the special revelation of God made by the God-man, Brunner says the dividing line is this, the special revelation is 'once-for-all,' final, whereas the others are but occasional and fragmentary. "The Christian faith, in opposition to all popular religions, is not founded on occurrences but on the one unique occurrence, and indeed with the full consciousness of the uniqueness and 'once-for-allness' of this fact of revelation, and these qualities are not accidental, but a necessary element, rather the very thing itself" (*M.*, p. 6 f.) And this 'once-for-allness' is precisely, as the Epistle to Hebrews shows,

the characteristic of the atoning work of the God-man.

> They are but broken lights of Thee,
> And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

Why such a final, once-for-all revelation is needed by man is presented in a beautiful passage. This completes the analysis of 'Word' as creating personality, which we presented in the previous chapter. Says Brunner: "Word is the medium of fellowship. Word is not less but more than thought. Thought is a mind alone: but word is fellowship of mind. As the Greeks named Logos, it is 'word-of-me,' the Bible 'word' is 'word-to-me.' Greek philosophy allows the Divine to be *in* man and religion, deliverance, to him is only reminiscence. But the Word of God of the Bible is thought of as real address: therefore it creates both distance and fellowship. Distance, for God who speaks to me is He who is utter mystery, unknown to myself. He is the Creator over whose thoughts, of myself, I have nothing to say. That the God-relationship is based on the Divine Word means that we are men and not God: of ourselves we are not knowers of God and also, according to our deepest being, we are not 'continuous with God.' The Word of God indicates that there is no way from us to God, but only from God to us. It creates fellowship. The thought, the Logos in the Greek sense, leaves me alone with myself. It is entirely self-reflection, but because it is 'reminiscence,' knowing-from-out-of-my-

self, it is *a priori*. As it does not create distance, but on the contrary allows the I and God finally to flow together, so it is not formative of fellowship, but is monological. But God who speaks to me wants to have fellowship with me. How could He speak to me otherwise? The Word which creates the absolute distance, the Word of the Cross, creates also absolute fellowship. For it is the perfect Word, the perfect self-impartation of God to created men. Word is self-impartation, revelation of the mystery of person creating fellowship, self-surrender to another. God's perfect self-impartation, His perfect self-surrender to man is, therefore, also His perfect Word" (*M.*, p. 397 f.).

Before we turn to the work of the God-man in redemption we must indicate the view, paradoxical in expression, that the God revealed is also concealed in His revelation. The paradox is really resolved by remembering that, as Barth puts it, the revelation comes to man as *viator*, still a pilgrim, and not 'at home,' *a comprehensor*. "There is no knowing God without acknowledging His incomprehensibility. The hidden God is also always the revealed God, as certainly as the converse must be said. 'We know in part' (1 Cor. xiii. 9), on our side *we* only know Him fragmentarily, *i.e.*, in this break, dialectically. But from God's point of view is to be said, 'God gives the Spirit without measure' (John iii. 34), not in a certain amount, but entirely or not at all. And of the same Spirit is said, 'He searches all things, yea, the depths of God'

(1 Cor. ii. 10); and of Christ, 'In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily' (Col. ii. 9). He who knows the revealed God, he and he alone knows also the hidden God. . . . God is altogether in His revelation."

The concealment is due to the state of humiliation of the God-*man* in the Incarnation, and also to man's mental bluntness through sin. We have not space to give Barth's long exposition of these points; they are but an expansion of two sayings of Pascal's: "It was not consistent that He should appear in a manner manifestly divine, and capable of convincing all men irresistibly; nor, on the other hand, would it have been right to have been so perfectly concealed, as not to be discoverable by those who sought Him sincerely. . . . The Divine intention is more to produce a perfection of the will than of the understanding; but a perfect clearness would be only of use to the understanding, and it would be hurtful to the will." Barth will not allow that the *human* nature of Jesus was a vehicle of the revelation of *God*. "The human nature of Christ is a creation of the Triune God, created and taken over for this, to be the vessel of the Revealer, the self-revealing Person of God, but still a creature and therefore not the Revealer Himself. The 'Jesus of History,' without the content of the Divine essence; the 'Dearest Lord Jesus' of the mystic and the Pietist; the Teacher of Wisdom and Friend of Man of the Illumination (*Aufklaerung*, German), the Purport of exalted humanity of

Schleiermacher, etc.,—is an empty throne without a king, the warm adoration of whom is a deifying of the creature and nothing else" (*Dg.*, p. 135).

This vehement passage will explain why Barth is abhorred by these various types of mind. To English readers, also, this way of putting things may cause offence, for it is a commonplace to talk of "God being like Jesus," *i.e.*, the human being. To use the recurring phrase in both Barth's and Brunner's works, the human Jesus is "the Great Incognito." Kierkegaard seems to be the source of the phrase, and though the passage is rather long, the fact that otherwise it might not be known to our readers, owing to the Dane's works being untranslated into English, we give it, and close this part, on the God-man as Revealer.

"He is God but chooses to become this single man. This is the deepest incognito or the most impenetrable state of non-recognition that is possible. For the contradiction between being God and being an individual man is the greatest possible, the infinitely qualitative difference. But it is His will, His own free-will, and therefore an incognito sovereignly maintained. In a certain sense He has let it seem as if He had once for all allowed Himself to be bound thereby: His unrecognized state was so sovereignly maintained that He Himself, so to speak, is dominated by His incognito, wherein the literal actuality of His purely human suffering lies. This is not merely a seeming, but in a certain sense is the

ascendancy over Himself of the adopted incognito. Only so is it taken in deepest earnest that He became true man, wherefore He even endured the utmost suffering, to feel Himself forsaken by God (on the Cross). Thus, then, in no moment was He without suffering, but really was *in* the suffering and it came to pass to Him, the purely human being, that the reality showed still more startlingly than the possibility, that He who freely accepted the state of being unknown, still suffered really as though he were imprisoned, or had imprisoned Himself in this state of non-recognizability" (*Indoevelse i Christendom*, 1850; Germ. trans. *Einuebung im Christentum* p. 118 f.; cited by Brunner, *M.*, p. 296 f.).

## § iii. As Reconciler

The passage from Kierkegaard just quoted brings us to the deepest mystery of the Christian faith, Why did Christ die on the Cross? Both Barth and Brunner recognize this death as a mystery unfathomable by man. They lay the emphasis, as in all their discussions of revelation, upon the first member of the term, God-man. The conjunction of the two terms is the warrant for their dialectical theology, and the Cross is the supreme example known to man of the brokenness of his thinking and of his life as he relates it to God. Barth shows that revelation is identical with reconciliation. "Revelation is God's action, which is related to the Fall of man, to the inversion of the original relation to Him

established at the Creation. God's loyalty triumphs in man's disloyalty to Him. Therefore the mystery of its How? is inconceivable. Reconciliation is only to be understood as a paradox corresponding to the paradox of the Fall. It is not understood of itself, it is a miracle, *the* miracle" (*Dg.*, p. 257). Brunner too recognizes its mystery: "It is not the task of theology to explain this mystery: if man could do that it would only be accidental, therefore not really Divine mystery. But it is theology's weightiest task to bring to the understanding and to fix in the clearest possible words what is meant by this mystery. The word mystery must not be to us an asylum for ignorance . . . for the message the Gospel gives us is a luminous clear message of the Cross" (*M.*, p. 383).

It can be honestly said that in the hundred pages which Brunner devotes to this work of the Mediator, he succeeds in giving such a clear message. Indeed this is the weightiest contribution both make to fill up the 'vacuum' within the preaching of the Church. Within a few paragraphs it is impossible to give more than a rough sketch of this compact thinking. But at once it should be said, both these writers state plainly that God does all the work of restoring man to fellowship with Him, broken through man's sin. And Brunner expressly says that in this speech we can only deal with similes and with no adequate expressions. "Every one of them is necessary and illumines the matter anew, but none for themselves alone are sufficient and

adequate. All these expressions are radii of a circle which point to one centre, yet without touching it. How can it be otherwise since what is the essence of all theology's assertions is, 'Radii towards a centre, but in the midst, a gap'? God cannot be expressed" (*M.*, p. 411, note. This is as fine as J. B. Mozley's classic phrase, "Justice is a fragment, mercy is a fragment, mediation is a fragment; justice, mercy, mediation as a reason of mercy—all three; what indeed are they but great vistas and openings into an invisible world in which is the point of view which brings them all together?" *University Sermons*, p. 177).

Brunner attacks Ritschl's view, not only because Ritschl took the view that God has no anger, but also for making justification precede atonement: he attacks Deissmann as representing others who lately have put cult-mysticism to the front, "presupposing that the Christ-faith as to its essence is Christ-mysticism and serves the tendency, like the whole theological work of Deissmann, to construe the clear expressions of a Paul as secondary reflexes, faith-concepts in general, as dead secretions of the one living religious feeling" (*ibid.*, p. 394, n.). Anselm's theory of the Atonement is used, but it is not the only one which represents the costliness of the work to God. Even M'Leod Campbell's view that the Saviour must make mankind's repentance for sin, finds echo and expansion when Brunner says: "To repent means, to die. We seriously repent first when we know that we cannot even

once really repent, that even our earnestness does not attain, that Christ must repent for us. Only as 'in Christ,' and indeed in the Cross of Christ, can we really repent" (*ibid.*, p. 485). But Dale's view, that the law of righteousness is as it were something external to God to which He must conform, has no place with Barth and Brunner. For God is All-Sovereign: He is above His law and can abrogate it at will, and man is never at all *His* judge.

This last point is jubilantly put by Barth. He is citing Paul's words, "raised with Christ, buried with Christ," etc. "We hear the Word of God through Jesus: inconceivable end of our existence in the contradiction, inconceivable new beginning in an 'Above' over this contradiction. God's Word? What is that? Plainly the word of One who, mighty enough to reconcile us to Himself, stands beyond the contradiction in which we find ourselves, *beyond* our contradiction to Him, *beyond* our consequent contradiction with ourselves. Beyond our contradiction, and mighty enough to reconcile us in our contradiction to Him, in order to release us finally out of our contradiction. Because He plainly is *prior* to our contradiction, because He is so sovereign beyond our existence in the contrasts that, without Him, the Creator, the contrasts would not exist. But, because only through Him there is the contradiction, He can demonstrate Himself to believers as the Lord who in Jesus arranged their death and their resurrection" (*Dg.*, p. 176). Thus "God was

in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing to them their trespasses."

Brunner shows how the 'gap' to be bridged concerns man's sense of guilt. "We are not merely far from God, our life is not only unlike God's, God must not only overcome a distance in order to come unto us. It is not merely the different mode of being, the finitude, that separates us from God. That would be something merely negative: something we lacked. Rather it is something *between* us and God, a block in the way, which we cannot push aside. It is sin, rather, the guilt of sin. For guilt is that about sin by which it belongs unalterably to the past and as this unalterable fatally determines every present. In guilt the past—the 'not-again-to-make-good'—of sin is installed in the reckoning of every present. Therefore we first grasp our life as totality when we see it together in these dark shadows of sin. The consciousness of sin is the break-through of seriousness. . . . This guilt is not a material thing—this perhaps is the chief failure of Anselm's doctrine—but is wholly personal, the perverted attitude to God, therefore something utterly infinite, as the soul, as the relation to God itself. . . . That setting to God is the kernel of human being; its setting to God is perverted, lost through folly, lost. It is God's holiness and righteousness that permits us to perceive this subjective as an objective; since our setting to God has gone wrong, God's setting to us has become different Not merely subjectively, from out of us, lies guilt between

us and God, but objectively, from out of God" (*ibid.*, p. 400).

Guilt brings with it a sense of outrage upon God's honour and holiness, to which His wrath corresponds, and His punishment of us attaches. Brunner shows how Anselm touched a right note, though the payment idea is defective, when he correlated guilt and penalty within the Divine law; "For law," says Brunner, "is the backbone, the bony skeleton, the granite foundation of the spiritual world. . . . In law, in its solidity absolutely, its unbreakableness, its absolute consequence, its self-asserting identity through all changes of appearance, the eternity and absoluteness of God becomes first and most impressive to us. The law indicates the sovereignty of the thinking will beyond the world which co-ordinates and remains like itself, true to self. Ethical law shows us this will as one directed to us personally, which by its 'Thou shalt' awakes us to personality. . . . That will 'is the world's creator and mine, who in the law speaks to me, to *me*, not the man, me, here, now, so'" (*ibid.*, p. 414 f.). It is not merely law I break when I sin, but God whom I hurt, and punishment is His vindication of law, His holy reaction against my wrongdoing.

The idea of sin as a stain needing to be removed, an offence which is obnoxious to the eyes of "Him whose eyes are too pure to behold iniquity," lies, Brunner thinks, behind the expiatory sacrifices—and a true idea at that. That aspect is rescued from the oblivion into which

it seems to have fallen of late, and warmly defended, though as a symbol it is not altogether defended. The sufferings of the Messiah completely express what is real and true in that aspect of sin and its removal.

Other aspects of this infinitely varied theme are dwelt on, but this long chapter must close. Man as a sinner has nothing to expect but judgment, doom, hell. Then comes the miracle of forgiveness. Only in Scripture, not at all in the world elsewhere, do we hear of forgiveness. On the Cross we first see what it cost God to redeem man from sin. Only God could undo its evil; slay death, the wages of sin, and deliver man from its thraldom. "The Cross is the only place where the loving, forgiving, pitying God is so manifestly revealed, that He is to be recognized as equally the holy as the loving, absolutely," says Brunner. He shows how this many-sidedness is paradoxical. "The Biblical God is indeed in His revelation the inconceivable because He reveals in His nearness His infinite farness, in His mercy His judgment, in His personality His absoluteness: because in His revelation His glory and man's healing, His own will and His being-for-us, His majesty and His gentleness cannot be severed from one another. As this God He is the Coming One, who, coming in sinful flesh, paid the price, bore the punishment Himself, Himself overcame the gap that divided us—really overcame it, declared it as *non-existent*. This coming is the unveiling of what He is in Himself, 'after His inmost

heart. . . .' That 'the Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep,' that is Divine love" (*ibid.*, p. 428 f.).

Such is the work of the God-man in redemption. "This weight of guilt, this necessity of an objective act of reconciliation mankind first came to know, generally, in Christ. The gulf, the thing that lies between became first clear in its magnitude by the occurrence of reconciliation, by the Cross. Answer and question, help and knowledge of need, are simultaneously in the revelation of Christ there in One. Only at the Cross does man know wholly what separates him from God: there where he knows it as no more separating him. The paradox, the unity of the opposites, which is characteristic of the Christian knowledge of God, is here perfect" (*ibid.*, p. 408).

## CHAPTER XI

### THE MAN OF FAITH

"TRUSTING God is to be alone in a great sea with 70,000 fathoms under one," said Soeren Kierkegaard, and that exaggerated emphasis characterized Barth's descriptions of faith when he "tugged the rope of the big church bell" in the *Rom.* But, as a son of the Alps, the figure is changed from deep-sea soundings to the desperate clinging to a rope over a precipice. "The faith of man is the will for empty space": "faith is for all the like leap into the void": "man's faith is agitated continuance in negation": "faith is never ready, never given, never secured; seen from psychology it is ever and ever anew the leap into the unknown, into the dark, into empty air"—such are Barth's modes of stating what faith is. He varies the figure at times: "faith is an empty shell-hole, a cavity, a vacuum which can only be filled by God." Another favourite expression is that "we are ever walking on the knife-edge—a mountaineering term—and can only go forward with a yawning chasm on either side."

It is not to be wondered at that such language rouses the ire of good Lutherans, and all who emphasize the subjective side of Christian experi-

ence under the concept of faith. Barth notes that Feuerbach attacked Luther's exaltation of faith as being almost a divine hypostasis "coming forth and working independently. It not only justifies, comforts, works love and good works, it even overcomes sin and death and makes blessed. It makes (as a trusting of the heart) both God and an idol: it can occasionally be called a 'creator of God,' if also only within us." Barth admits that this extravagant speech of Luther's needs explanation and safeguarding. But he himself is not without the same need when, in reaction against this subjectivity, he makes faith to be a 'mere mediating-point,' 'a pipe,' as though the soul of man had not some activity in the work of believing. This activity Barth admits, but it is always 'blind obedience.' Faith and obedience are practically synonyms in Barth's writings, and the obedience is not at all grounded on 'the reason for the faith' that one has.

One of the clearest passages in Barth concerning faith is to be found in his address to the Roman Catholics at Münster. In it he deals implicitly with both the Romans, the Pietists, and the psychologists of religious experience. "We Protestants understand by 'faith' the human receiving and laying hold of God's grace, already even wrought by grace, whereby this grace, precisely as grace, is God's ineffable beneficence in both respects, viz., respecting the receiving and feeling of it; it is and *remains* God's grace, the reality of the Logos and of the

Spirit of God which obtains control over man. Such that, in the Word and in the Sacrament, man sensibly perceives and reasonably knows, in his heart experiences, without his gaining control over grace in the very least—and that is the decisive thing—as he gains control over all other realities that he perceives, knows, and experiences. Man obtains it, not because in grace it has to do with the holy God, who even, since He is gracious to us, dwells in light inaccessible, and because man is a sinner whose fellowship with God is in every moment and relation only possible and actual as from God, without reciprocity, without man ever coming into the position to lay his hand on God as God lays His hand on *him*. Therefore such that in every moment and in every relation man is held by God, and not by himself. Neither can man hold himself by means of his perceiving, though his faith is a perceiving, a knowing, an experience. For God is *God*, but man is a creature and a sinning creature" (*TK.*, p. 295).

Against the psychologists Barth argues that, methodically considered, all their formulas—he gives ten from modern theologians—can be reduced to the Cartesian proof of God as an innate idea in man, although some moderns prefer to speak of a developed experience or faith. He contests their assumptions on the subjective side and asks: "What is meant by knowing of God if I, in order to be certain of this knowing, have previously to fulfil this condition of attributing to my religious experience a

content of reason *a priori*, to understand it as the one pole of the original reality of all knowledge and all validity, to know myself as the possessor of the specific content of the Christian experience, or indeed as the man who has experienced the 'incomparable' and 'irrefutable' (so H. Scholz), who has discovered in himself that 'unalterableness' or the 'absolute root-ground' of his existence (so Luedemann), or knows in the ground of *his* personality the absolute personality of *God*, the man who knows himself 'unconditionally bound' and 'unconditionally freed' (as Schaeder asserts), or, stripping off from himself as an old garment the objective consciousness, has part in God's self-consciousness (so Bruhn and Brunstäd)?" "If I must assert such things of myself, soberly speaking, they are not true." He concludes by saying: "The word of God is not contained and grounded in the Christian faith, but Christian faith is grounded and contained in the Word of God. When this relation is reversed there is a falsification on falsification along the whole line and at all points. Doctrine is not an hour-glass that can be reversed and run just the same" (*Dg.*, pp. 53 ff., 87). "Under Word of God is to be understood, in all circumstances, a speech of God, an act, whose subject is God and God alone. But that reality obviously cannot be a content of our human consciousness. It is really in God's consciousness and nowhere else. As such then in faith it may be believed—but truly not as if it were thereby given to men in

faith as its object-content. But faith believes it directly as the 'not-given' to men, as God's own and abidingly His own" (*ibid.*, p. 95).

Against the Pietists and mystics, who find in emotionalism the ground for their religious assurance, the same argument is directed. Brunner put it briefly thus: "In Schleiermacher, one can be pious (through reflection) before and without one's own knowing of God. . . . The mystic knows of God by reflection upon his state of feeling, and he knows figuratively. In the New Testament the objective undoubtedly is put first, the subjective second. Word is first, faith is second, the taking up of a position, second." That position is explained as follows: "The presupposition of faith is not some kind of working, a 'becoming-moved,' but Word that gives me to know something over me, for me; it offers to me my own Yes and No: a claim over against me, a promise to be accepted, an assertion of will by God, a making His thoughts prevail, which corresponds to a taking-in-claim from His side, an allowing-to-prevail, a letting-one's-self be taken captive, 'under obedience to Christ,' a grace which consists in being directed 'unto obedience of faith' (Rom. i. 5). Where there is no word claiming obedience, there is no faith" (*MW.*, pp. 132, 159).

In this mode of thinking the man of faith has never any subjective assurance upon which to build. Hence there is a constant polemic against the Pietism which claims inner certitude

of faith, a view close akin to some types of Methodism and Keswickism in this country. Gogarten put that strongly: "So far as this faith (*sc.* in God's revelation in Jesus) is human activity, and it is that in all its extent, it stands under all the agitations which all human action stands under. And so there remains here in the sphere of revelation no sparing of that agitation. And he who thinks that in this sphere will be found repose and assurance and certainty, as religious promises to men, but only promises, he will be bitterly disillusioned" (*Von Glaube u. Offenbarung*, p. 19). And so, to use Luther's often quoted word, the man of faith has a 'comforted despair.' Despair of himself: comfort because God is his refuge and strength. Brunner has finely expressed this tense mood of soul. "The distinctive thing about faith is its objectivity of direction (towards God). This is peace. Psychologically the believer is not simply freed. His heart remains an agitated thing, there does not cease to it the ebb and flow of feeling, the waxing and waning of power, vivid tension and relaxation, fearing and hoping, the change from joy and being depressed. The Christian situation is a 'comforted despair.' But even *comforted* despair. All these psychical waves flow in experience over one ground, that is firm and clear, on which stands the inscription: "I belong to Christ in spite of all: in spite of myself, my feelings and happenings, in spite of all experiences of my own powerlessness even in faith. I belong to Christ not

through my faith, but through Christ's speech, through God's Word, to me in Him, the Mediator."

"It is even this objectivity of the Fact of Christ and of Christ's Word, that gives this subjectivity its character. We may liken it to *ecstasy*—to be out-of-oneself is faith. But of a totally different kind from the mystic's ecstasy: this as a psychological happening lasts a single moment and then vanishes. But faith, in being ecstasy, is indeed independent of happening. It is setting oneself on a fixed point outside of the stream of occurrence, on the other shore, which, consequently, cannot be explained from the stream of occurrence, because it is not my place and doing, but God's, because it is God's act in an objective fact, because it is the Cross of Christ, or, according to sense, the same, viz., the Word of Scripture" (*M.*, p. 477).

This point of view has been well expressed by J. C. Shairp:

> I grasp Thy strength, make it my own,
> My heart with peace is blest;
> I lose my hold, and then comes down
> Darkness and cold unrest.
> Let me no more my comfort draw
> From my frail hold of Thee:
> In this alone rejoice with awe,
> Thy mighty grip of me.

The old question as to the relation of the objective and the subjective in the theory of knowledge about the world outside of ourselves emerges again when the man of faith asks, How

can I know that transcendent world from which God speaks? Brunner would at once reply that: "Faith is the contrary of proof, for proof is the assuring of thought, a more certain anchoring of the new-to-be-known in the already known. Faith cannot be grounded: it does not 'stand,' it depends. It depends only on God's Word, because it is God's Word that prevails. He who does not trust this Word knows it not as God's Word, and does not believe. One cannot possibly believe and also seek proof. Faith is pure dependence on revelation" (*M.*, p. 268). But when the man of faith looks into his heart at moments when faith is most active, *i.e.*, when he hears the voice of God through His Word, then within his heart he hears an echo, and "this echo of the Word of God in the heart as God's speaking to us, is the Holy Ghost" (*ibid.*, p. 251). In a footnote on the same page he makes the acute remark that: "The spirituality of Christian faith is recognizable in that the tension of opposition of subjective and objective is perfect: faith is equally the most objective—the external word, the historical fact—and the most subjective—God's Spirit in us, the *verbum alienum* and the Word of God's own speech in the heart."

If next, one asks how the Spirit comes to us, he replies: "It is the same God who speaks 'outwardly' in Christ and 'inwardly' in the heart, who is Christ 'for us' and Christ 'in us': none without the other. It is the Spirit of God who witnesses the Word of Truth, and it is the

Word of God that mediates the Spirit" (*ibid.*, p. 252).

Barth deals with this crucial question when scholastically expounding his thesis on God, the Holy Ghost, in the *Dg.* (Sec. 14). The thesis runs: "The One God reveals Himself as the Redeemer, *i.e.*, as He who is Sovereign in the removing of the contradiction of man to Him and with himself. But He is as such the Gift of Grace, because as the Spirit of the Father and of the Son He is in Himself originally the Holy Ghost" (p. 199). The problem he neatly styles as "the problem of appropriation, the apperception of revelation by man." Apart from the New Testament assurances he says rightly that no historian or psychologist can explain the belief in the Resurrection. "Out of what psychology of religion can one derive the presuppositions for this belief?" he asks. "Does not this belief transcend every known organ, every capacity for such an organ or such a function?" The very capacity of man to receive it is denied: to explain such a faith requires one to seek an explanation in God. That is given in the New Testament: the 'anointing' and 'sealing' of the Holy Spirit as God's gift of grace. Presuppose that gift, then the faith can be accounted for. It is the gift of God, not any talent or cleverness of man's. "There is *not* asserted with the confession of the Holy Ghost an expansion or development quantitatively or qualitatively of man, from it does not follow a new anthropology, though the

'liberal' and positive new-Protestants may call so zealously for it in unison with the Catholic doctrine of grace. As he *is*, man receives the Holy Ghost; as he *is*, but that means that he stands with absolutely empty hands in the possession of the Spirit, over against God. Poured out upon all flesh, the Holy Ghost remains the *Holy* Ghost, altogether the Spirit of the Promise of what man *shall* be—not on his side *is* already, not as *his* possession is he in a position to brag about it—but what he *shall* be. . . . God remains the Lord in our receiving of His Word, also in our being spoken to by Him, also in the receiving of His Gift. None but He enters in to be beside us, none other; and no other enters in for us to be beside Him, save Himself. 'In Thy light we see light'—this is the theory of knowledge of revelation" (p. 206 f.).

In a later section, when dealing with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Sec. 17), Barth resumes the discussion of "the subjective possibility of revelation." He answers the question, How can man become and be a receiver of revelation without ceasing to be man? by quoting Calvin, "Only by that inward Teacher, the Spirit, making entrance through His illumination" (*Inst.*, III., ii., 34). Barth goes over the ground at length describing man's inability of himself, through his fallen state, to get back to God, to stand before Him, to have fellowship with Him. "Man is out of the Truth" (a saying of Kierkegaard's), is in contradiction to this truth which

is not a compulsion, nature, or fate hanging over us, but a contradiction which we produce by our own responsible doing. That act we cannot deny, it is our very existence, so that its surmounting would denote nothing more or less than the exaltation and new-setting of our existence and thereby of the subject, man. We cannot 'above ourselves erect ourselves' or set ourselves anew. Man must come to feel 'his emptiness and woe,' his inability, and present himself as an empty vessel for God to fill, to become his own subjectivity. "It needs nothing less than that God Himself, His reality, should be the solving of this riddle, the filling out of the empty space indicated in this paradox. And the reality of the good-pleasure in which God grasps man, so that man can be in the position to look from God to God, is just God the Holy Ghost. He it is who, as Redeemer God, enters now and here already for our humanness imprisoned in the contradiction. In Him are we hearing, seeing, receptive for the reality of God's Word. As relation between Him and the Word, faith and obedience of man are qualified as his real fellowship with God. Apart from the act of the Holy Ghost, apart from the event of Pentecost, all construction of the subjective possibility of revelation is once again a bridge which ends in the empty space over the abyss" (*Dg.*, pp. 285-291, condensed). That is how Barth thinks out the meaning of Charles Wesley's lines :

> God, through Himself we then shall know
> If Thou within us shine.

The Spirit of grace conveys not only grace but God to the hearts of men, and makes God accessible to men. "This access appears because He speaks His Word through the Spirit to the Spirit, since the Spirit speaks in the Word, and the Spirit, the same Spirit, hears in us. That is to say: it appears in faith and obedience" (*Dg.*, p. 455). And so the man of faith is ever and always without intermission a man of *faith*.[1]

One might conclude that man is to be entirely passive in this transaction, as Quietism taught, and as certain forms of pantheism suggest. That, however, is far from Barth's intention. Elsewhere he quotes Calvin's great passage (*Inst.*, I., xiii., 14) to dispel such an error. "He it is," says Calvin, "who is everywhere diffused, the Spirit, who sustains, arouses, and quickens all things in heaven and earth, by transfusing His vigour to all, inspiring them with essence, life, and motion." Barth adds: "The Holy Spirit is *actus purus*, which the entire material and spiritual creature is not, and, without Him, has not" (*Dg.*, p. 210). But characteristically Barth omitted the closing words of Calvin's passage: "id vero plane divinum est" (but that is clearly Divine), for Calvin admitted that man could be a judge of the Divine, to some extent!

We come to the relation of the man of faith to ethical action, as taught by the Barthians. Brunner told his American audiences, when

[1] It will repay the English reader to compare Barth's dialectical method with the way in which the late R. C. Moberley reached the same conclusion in *Atonement and Personality*.

delivering his lectures on *TC.*, that this question of faith and ethics was the one most frequently asked in Germany by critics. His reply takes up the fourth lecture, and as it is easily procurable the reader is directed there for a full statement of his views. But a passage or two from his untranslated works may be of service. Barth, Brunner, and the others of this mode of thought, are all confirmed activists. Quietism they abhor.

On the subjective side of faith, as related to the systems of Schleiermacher and ethical idealists, Brunner says: "Faith has nothing to do with the absolute experienced in feeling, with indifference, the neutral balance between the ideal and the real, which is therefore quiescent impersonal being, nor with the all-explaining principle of harmony of pantheism, but with the Living God of the prophets of Israel, whose will is 'to create a new world, a new heaven and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.' Hence the revolutionary energy of faith, which revolutionizes all revolution itself, because it sets all the 'given' under judgment." The source and issue of faith are set forth thus: "Faith arises out of the Divine promise and from nothing else. But he who knows what ethical willing and duty mean alone understands this promise. It is related to action throughout, because one must act his faith. Faith does not merely create; it is ethical energy, power of obedience. By faith one is drawn into the activity of God. Not satisfaction of self, but satisfaction of God, not 'holy music' (so Schleiermacher, *Reden*), which

accompanies life, not rest but new equipment for going, doing, fighting. He who believes is thereby developed into God's grip on the world" (*MW.*, pp. 167, 168).

The man of faith is therefore a man of 'good works.' The one goal to which this school of theology drives is that of doing the will of God out of personal obedience to God. "Faith, the Spirit, God, are not lazy" is constantly reiterated. But the foundation of the only ethic which can redeem modern Europe, destroy militarism and capitalism, is in the Christian doctrine of faith. In a brilliant closing chapter of *M.* Brunner develops this truth. We summarize his arguments: "The whole gospel of Jesus Christ is an exposition of the First Commandment, 'I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have no other gods before me.'" This doctrine is the grounding of all ethics. And man's response, obedience, is only possible where man believes the Mediator. He develops these points in six theses:

(1) Only in the Mediator do we know really what we are. Men out of Christ, non-Christians as ethicists, are in two classes: cynical-determinists, or enthusiastic-ideologues: realists or idealists. The realist sees the inherited-sin and the curse of original sin, but not sins as such or the curse. The idealist sees freedom and the original, the idea of man, but not that this freedom and this origin are lost. Human ethics are impossible to both, for one removes responsibility and freedom, the other, guilt and entanglement.

(2) Only in the Mediator does the will of God, therefore the Good, become known as love. Here the incapacity of eudæmonism as an ethical principle is shown, and idealistic ethics incapable of revealing to us the meaning of the good. Even Kant could not, and did not, attempt a synthesis of inclination and duty, which makes up love. "Love is divine, not human possibility: love can only be there where it is given: this possibility lies outside human-legal limits. The God of love is the God who comes, seeks, delivers, imparts Himself, assumes ours and confers His things. Only in God who forgives is love to be known. But the meaning of the Good is revealed in love, for 'love is the fulfilling of the law.' God's love is the affirming and the overcoming of the world: the most conservative, establishing the order of creation, the most radical, the grounding and creating anew of all that is existing: the Yea to the sinner who renounces his being, the Nay in that it calls him back again into the Divine being."

(3) Man sees, first in Christ, his neighbour, and loves him.

Love can only be what God does to us: He takes us as we are and we are to take our neighbour as he is. Love sends us into the world: it is worldly, concrete, going to the neighbour in his need, not as a case. It is no human possibility, apart from Christ: 'in Christ' it is possible in the setting in which I and the neighbour are drawn through Christ through faith.

(4) First in Christ is man's own will broken in all its pride and God's honoured. From autonomy one passes to theonomy. In the former we see the original sin of man in its finest, purest, most developed form: the seeking to be as God, seeking to live from oneself, emancipation from God's grace, from dependency, from the Giver. "Only in faith is that lie destroyed, that man stands alongside of God as a partner, only in faith does man recognize that God is the Creator and man a creature." Here the old, yet-needed doctrine, that man is justified by faith, is developed: its end is 'to the sole glory of God,' of His grace. "Faith in the gratuitous salvation makes a man humble: the breaking down of one's own will before God. Here is the whole ethical battle. The bad says: '*My* will be done, *my* name be honoured, *my* kingdom come.' The good says: 'Thy will be done,' etc. A third does not exist."

(5) First in the belief in justification the Good becomes, from a postulate, a reality.

Naturalistic ethics is only a doctrine of prudence: idealistic ethics, understanding the ethical as a 'must,' leaves the good as a mere postulate, a demand, law without power, and so finally, ideology. Christian ethics goes out from the 'given'; given in the Word of God. In the faith in justification ethics is grounded in the being which God asserts is our being: the sinner is justified. The new in Christianity is that man comes already *from* the good, the righteousness that man has 'in Christ.' To live

from grace means that one begins from his I: the I is not the goal of a long way, but the starting-point, to which one must ever go back. The righteousness which Christ gives is the Christian's crown and garland: his new pride which is yet humble, for it is a gift, *gratia gratis data*. The man is made good, and Luther's dictum, "Not good works make a good man, but a good man makes good works," is realized. He has 'the good will' which Kant rightly said was the postulate of all goodness. Here Brunner comes to the Reformers' teaching, that the doer is a sinner, always a sinner. The question arises: "How of a sinner's will can a good will be made?" The answer is: "In Christ the man becomes a new creature; set on new ground: the new-birth." Now ethics gains a new meaning. It is no longer 'should-be' ethics, but 'is' ethics (Ger. *Seins-Ethik*), and its characteristic is not forwards but backwards, not the whither but the whence. It is good done, not out of slavishness, but from free-will: it is that of the child, done from love.

(6) Simply and alone, through Christ believed in, does man acquire a real ethical relation to historical reality.

The realistic judgment concerning history runs: *semper idem*. The idealistic, "history is the realm of progress." This utopian overvaluing of progress by the idealist is the mind coming to itself, the awakening of spirit, coming to itself like wakening in the morning. It ends, as with Schopenhauer, in pessimism, in face of

the drawback of reality. "Christian faith knows neither this pessimism nor this optimism. For it knows of sin, of judgment, of condemnation; it sees more optimistically than idealism, for it knows not merely of an inner-historical development or progress, but of the coming Kingdom of eternity, of the resurrection from the dead, and of the fuller deliverance. Because for it—and it alone—is the Once-for-all, here alone is the real turning-point and real history therefore. The Once-for-all, faith in the Mediator, is the only serious turning-point; apart from this faith, man knows only of relative turning-points—in the indefinite meaning of history. *History, in the qualified sense, exists first through Christ.*"

But Christian faith, construing history, is far removed from faith in progress: for it is serious and faith in progress is not. It is serious, believes in crisis; therefore in judgment, and therefore, *not* in progress: for where judgment is, there can clearly be no more talk of progress. Because this crisis, this turning-point—deciding for or against Christ—falls within history, therefore and in so far, history has weight. The purport of this crisis is the Church. History comes Christianly into consideration as Church-history. World-history is qualified through Christ as Church-history (*M.*, pp. 538-561).

At this point we must leave Brunner, for our theme is the man of faith, and Brunner has passed to the larger theme of the relation of the Church to world-history and civilization. The relation of the believer's faith to hope is the

closing point where we tarry for a few moments. Amid all the seeming pessimism of a theology which proclaims God as hidden in His revelation, Christ as only to be known 'after the Spirit' and not 'after the flesh'—Himself hidden—the new life of the Christian also a hidden one, 'with Christ in God,' and this world of space and time, a ruin and a wreck, soon to be ended: amid all this there is an optimism, for hope is directed to the transcendent world. These theologians never forget that faith is never sight. As Brunner says: "Faith is only faith, not sight; Word is only word, not thing itself. Active as faith is, it does not grow into sight. Powerful as the Word is, it is not the thing itself which it expresses." The deliverance of the man of faith is not to be seen within this world, but beyond it. As Barth puts it: "God proclaims to man in this world of sin the possibility of the lost home as he finds himself in the chaos of the far country; God opens again to him the door of Paradise in the midst of his world—a world of want and the fight of faith. He allows it to be announced that the Kingdom has come, and so makes hope possible—that sighing but real hope. Reconciliation is not yet deliverance but the act of God's mercy this side of the boundaries eschatological, between the Fall and redemption" (*Dg.*, p. 258 f.).

This message of hope, proclaimed in the midst of war-wrecked Europe, explains one reason for the welcome it has received. It is an echo of the Reformers' teaching, in an equally bad time,

and all these writers delight to cull extracts from Calvin and Luther, which proclaim inextinguishable hope. This of Luther's is often mentioned: "In these words, 'I hope in the Lord' the sum of the Christian faith is contained, which rests not in perception (by sense) but in hope." And Calvin supplies useful notes: "Hope nourishes and sustains faith. . . . Hope is nothing else than expectation of the things which faith has believed as truly promised by God" (*Inst.*, III., ii., 43). With glee this school dwells on the statements of Luther that there are no perceptible signs by which the senses can discern the work of grace. For thereby they can meet the psychologists of religion and the Pietists, with good backing from Luther. He says: "All God's works stand in paradox which reason will not understand other than through His words and sayings. Therefore one must give regard to it, for God gives and does all things spiritually that flesh and blood may not grasp, and that He may put reason to shame, and accustoms his saints to trust and look to Him alone. For if we speak of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, but perceive nothing but sin and eternal death, then we are not believing that it happens as God's word says to us. For everything goes directly against human experience and stands in pure hope. . . . Hope says: 'Trust and hope, for God has promised thee it (sin) shall be better and receive an end,' and the less thou feelest such help, the more shouldst thou hope" (Erlangen Ed., xv., p. 34).

Such a good Lutheran as Karl Heim, with whom Barth breaks many a lance, corroborates Luther's statement, from modern psychologism's scrutiny of the state of faith. Speaking of the accent of certainty within faith, Heim says: "The divine accent that falls upon the Yea does not depend upon an enhanced feeling of happiness, nor upon the strength of the religious emotions, as Schleiermacher thought, nor upon the visionary irruptions from another realm which could be psychologically established in Wm. James' sense, nor upon any attestable sign whatever, by which the affirmation could be empirically given preference over the denial and legitimated" (*Glaubensgewissheit*, p. 252).

So the man of faith and hope stands within this world, but his gaze is turned to the other world, for the existence of which he has nothing to stand on but the promises of God in His Word. This leads to a consideration of the meaning of history, its goal as well as its start, and the Barthian School have a view of history and a message on eschatology—the end of all things—startling and puzzling, which we shall set forth in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER XII

## HISTORY AND ESCHATOLOGY

"NOTHING is more baffling," says Kenneth Mozley, "than Barth's attitude to what we regard as inevitable questions concerning the truth of Biblical history." He calls attention to a passage in *WG.* (p. 72), where Barth says: "Biblical *history* in the Old and New Testaments is not really history at all, but seen from above is a series of free divine acts and seen from below a series of fruitless attempts to undertake something in itself impossible. From the viewpoint of ordered development in particular and in general it is quite incomprehensible." The nearest approach to an explanation Barth gives is to be found in the same essay when he says: "When God enters, history for the while ceases to be, and there is nothing more to ask; for something wholly different and new begins—a history with its own distinct grounds, possibilities, and presuppositions" (p. 37).

In the *Dg.* Barth goes some distance to explain what is meant by the new history which enters when God breaks through from the eternal world into 'this dim spot which men call earth.' He gives it the name of *Urgeschichte* a term borrowed from Franz Overbeck, which

means, "the history prior to history," "the history of the origin which stands behind the New Testament sources as a great X, visibly presenting itself to historical inquiry and presentation and equally withdrawing itself" (p. 230). This *Urgeschichte* is the point at which John's Gospel begins, "In the beginning was the Word," and we shall render the term 'pre-temporal' 'pre-history,' in this chapter. Barth connects it with the revelation which God makes, and explains that this special meaning of the term "is no historical-scientific concept, but a theological dogmatic one" (*ibid.*, p. 237). In metaphysics the term would denote the transcendental ground from which all that is phenomenal takes its rise. But Barth is ever anxious to avoid the term metaphysic, because this would lead to an idealistic philosophy, against which he is always contending. And again, he is ever at the 'existential' standpoint, where the religious interests are awake, the confronting of man's I with the Divine Thou, where man is put in question, whereas in philosophy, man is 'the subject' and 'spectating,' without being put into the situation of 'crisis,' making a decision.

But there is another reason for the choice of this term, 'pre-history.' It represents a reaction from the position of Ritschl, who sought in history, to the exclusion of metaphysics, a footing for religion. History is the sphere of the relative, the contingent, and the religious interest of Barth is centred in gaining something more

stable, the absolute, on which to depend. Hence the discarding of all psychologism and historism, to use their mode of speech. He is at pains to establish that while 'revelation is history,' we may not turn the phrase round and say, 'history is revelation.' For revelation is trans-history: it comes into it but is not of it. Or, to use New Testament language, "My kingdom is not of this world": history is 'from beneath,' revelation, 'from above.' Revelation precedes history, determines history, is manifest in and through history, but is ever distinct from history. As Barth says: "History is a predicate of revelation, but revelation would therefore be no predicate of history. Revelation is no category of the general predicate history. History in general is not revelation. In history in itself, so far as the eye can reach, is nothing that can ground faith. Pre-history has no continuity" (*ibid.*, pp. 232, 233, 237, 239). Elsewhere he presents the same idea. "History can well be a predicate of revelation, but revelation will never become a predicate of history. Whoso says history says not-revelation. For history as subject stands indeed, like man as such, in relation to God's Creation, but also to Adam's Fall and exclusion from Paradise, and not to Christ and the reconciliation manifest in Him. History is 'the whole inconceivable situation between Creation and redemption, in which we find ourselves'" (*TK.*, p. 310; he quotes Thurneysen's definition from *Zwischen den Zeiten*, Heft 9, p. 27).

The bearings of this restricted view of history

can be seen from a remark of Brunner's: "Christianly understood, history too is object and not subject of redemption. History or man are both 'this side' of revelation, when we look from the Christian viewpoint; both terms mean the same" (*M.*, p. 32). Man, since Adam's Fall, has no place in revelation beyond being a receiver: never a producer. Brunner's purpose is to prevent any opening for the notion that by a continuous development of forces resident in mankind man will ultimately be able to ascend to God. Man and God are on different planes: man can only know of God as God comes down to man's level. And only God can reveal Himself as God.

This view is carried through so radically that even the coming of Christ 'in the flesh' is not a revelation within history that the historian as such can receive: it is only a revelation to faith. And faith only receives it because there is a 'break-through' from the transcendent world, which is the 'dimension of faith,' to use a well-worn term of Brunner's. Even the Jesus of history is not the revelation of God. Brunner has some good remarks to make concerning the "mistake or misunderstanding when the object of Christian faith is held to be a historical fact simply." We must not confuse the phrase, 'Christ in the flesh' for the other, 'Christ after the flesh.' Thanks are due, he says, to historical criticism for obliging us to note the distinction, which is understood by faith. "Christ has for historical objectivity this rela-

tion, the doubled one, that He can only become known 'in the flesh' but not 'after the flesh.' 'The Christ in the flesh' offers a common point for the chronicler and the believer. The believer believes in the Christ of whom the chronicler has something to report. But the chronicler, the shaper of a report, or the historian equipped with the deepest understanding for the great and truly human in history, lays hold of the Christ 'after the flesh.' *Only* the believer sees another than the 'Christ after the flesh' in the 'Christ-in-the-flesh.' He knows Him in a manner that the others cannot know Him. They only know the 'flesh' not the Christ, the Incarnate Word. They only know the ethical-religious personality. But even the most believing knows the 'Christ after the flesh' only in 'the Christ in the flesh,' *i.e.*, in the historic personality. The knowledge of the brutal historic fact, including the whole humanity, is therefore *necessary presupposition*, but never the *sufficient ground* of knowledge of Christ" (*M.*, pp. 131-133: italics are Brunner's). He continues by asserting that "not from the historic picture of Jesus in the earthly life alone, but through the picture developed by the apostolic witness of the resurrection, sketched in the Gospels, comes the essence of revelation and faith."

Even then, according to Brunner, something more is needed. "The Christian faith asserts that the human eye is too weak and is not in a state to grasp all reality, but only a superficial view of reality. Its deeps, the mystery of God,

are unapproachable to us humans; only in revelation can they be known: not by human eyes, not even by one 'with a fresh look for the living and true feeling for the truly great,' but only the eye enlightened by the Holy Ghost" (p. 137). This is a new category of historical explanation; by this the literary evidences can be rightly understood, "for it is by the eye so enlightened that this history must be seen." He guards against solipsism and undue subjectivity. "The subjective conviction of a believer decides nothing concerning the objective truth of his faith. But the objective truth of faith is something altogether other than rational demonstration. One does not forget how much contradiction rests on the evidence of reason. But if faith, with the necessity of postulating, asserts historical facts that by historical science can be shown to be non-existent, that faith is false, even if Christian faith. But that does not say that the truth and certainty of Christian faith are dependent on historical science. Faith does not fear the light of historical criticism, but it sees what it sees, not in this light" (*ibid.*, p. 141, note).

On the relation of faith to historic facts he lays down the sound principle that "faith is compatible with even the most radical criticism of the Biblical tradition concerning the life of Jesus, but not compatible with any kind of criticism, *e.g.*, such as denies the existence of Jesus, or puts Him as a psychopath or a proletarian revolutionary. But faith is compatible with that kind of criticism which does not alter

the historical picture of the existence of Jesus so that the apostolic Christ-witness cannot be understood." Such a faith recognizes that "historical results in the absolute sense of the words are not given, but practically assured results are. He himself knows more clearly than most critics how unsecured all historical utterances are. He knows that he believes in a Jesus Christ who, considered scientifically-historically, must ever remain an unsolved problem: a Jesus Christ whose naked existence can be set in question on not inconsiderable grounds. But he knows that this attaches to the form of a servant that belongs to His coming in the flesh. But faith is not touched by this weakness." In such fashion Brunner deals with the fact of history as it concerns Christian faith.

There is no uncertainty about Brunner's attitude to the truth of Biblical history, especially that of the New Testament. Barth also has cleared up any difficulty on that score, since Mozley reviewed the book (*WG.*, cf. *Dg.*, Secs. 15-20 *et passim*). A valuable section in Brunner's *M.* deals with "The Christ-faith and the Results of History," which gives a résumé, leaving little to add, of the most recent discussions on the historic problems of the New Testament (pp. 145-171). There is a statement, to which all of this school would subscribe, which enables us to see how they face the Bible as the Word of God. "To Christian faith Scripture is a unity. Old and New Testament have at bottom only one Word of God to proclaim, the one Christ-

word. . . . The Christian faith asserts not only the unity, but the exclusive unity of Biblical revelation. This Word of God is also in the Old, as well as in the New Testament, the Word of Jesus Christ, the Word that in Jesus Christ is reality. . . . Not the letter but the Word, the Word-of-God of the Old and New Testament is the same" (p. 147 f.).

Some of Brunner's points we summarize. The one question is: "If Jesus were not God's Son and a Divine Being, who then was He?" It is 'up to' the modern theologian to prove his counter-thesis. Against Ritschl Brunner fights, for Ritschl "had an interest in driving a wedge between the New Testament as a whole and the Church doctrine." Harnack's attempt to separate the Prologue from John's Gospel was 'unfortunate'; Johannes Weiss' attempt to identify the Logos in John with Philo's is queried, though it indicates the "eagerness of early Christian teaching to embrace this Logos doctrine to bring the divine, absolute world-embracing character of God's revelation in the person of Christ to expression." The latest attempts to interpret from Mandæism (little of it heard as yet in Britain) bring John and Paul close to each other in their Christology. Then "the alleged grave between Paul and the pre-Pauline Christianity" has been levelled by J. Weiss and Bousset. In all essentials Paul's teaching is that of the Church prior to A.D. 50. Both are eschatological, awaiting a new age, the end of all history. Passing back to the Gospels,

all the recent discussions on the preaching of Jesus and preaching *about* Jesus are analysed. It is the theological problem which concerns Brunner, who puts it thus: "How is the difference between the teaching of Jesus and that of Paul to be understood from the viewpoint of Biblical revelation? The Church testimony is the Christology, the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the heavenly redeemer of the world, one and all. In His own preaching there is no speech about it, and history shows us a man Jesus, not a God—that is, 'the Synoptic Jesus,' as the catchword runs. What holds? The teaching of Jesus which has no Christology, or Apostles' teaching, thoroughly Christological?"

The way Brunner deals with this assumed contradiction is important for this school, for upon it all their construction of Christianity turns. He separates the problem of John's Gospel—its historical trustworthiness—from the Synoptics, for "the latter give a biography of the man Jesus as little as John does," but they testify of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and heavenly Lord. Therefore the issue is not Synoptics *or* John-Paul, but Church testimony of Jesus, the Christ, *or* the merely human picture of history.

Brunner starts with the *a priori*, from the presupposition of faith, that the Jesus of history is another than the Jesus of faith. Without such a faith the historian can only see a man. He points out that even orthodox apologists fall into the mistake of supposing that "either Jesus so spoke and was historically such as John

depicts Him or He is not the Christ." Brunner says, "John does not indicate the Christ as He is knowable to the historian, but as He *is*, knowable only to faith, as the historic, and equally, the Exalted One. His picture is not a photograph but a portrait." "The indirectness of the picture," he says, "the orthodox have understood as little as they have the indirect identity of revelation and the Scriptural word." From this the passage to the Incognito of the earthly life of the Servant in His state of humiliation, of which an account was given in Chapter X., can be easily seen. He puts it clearly thus: "The Christ of faith as historical personality is such an one in whom the mere historian can know nothing but a man; then history becomes for him occasion for faith. The fact of the Incarnation, of the Servant-form of the Christ, is identical with the possibility of holding Jesus as a mere man, and identical with the impossibility of knowing in Him something other than a man. The question whether Jesus is the Christ is not a historical question but one of faith" (*ibid.*, p. 160 f.).

Brunner admits the possibility of conflict between faith and history, or, put otherwise, Does the scientifically recognizable Jesus correspond with what faith asserts concerning this historically knowable Jesus, the humanity of Jesus? He discusses the alternative, under two further questions, as to the historical 'That,' and as to the historical 'What?'

On the 'That' he admits that "the naked

existence of Jesus is not historically guaranteed" ; that is, it is only testified by those with an interest in it, viz., believers. If His existence is *denied*, then the conflict with history would be incurable : but the actual finding is the contrary. He then examines the findings of the most extreme critics, and after allowing for the extreme form-criticism of Bultmann (*vide* his *Jesus*), finds that the picture of Jesus left is not much different from that in the Synoptics. The 'That' can be sustained. Now as to the 'What?' We may admit, he says, with the historians that the Church may have been mistaken with their testimony. It is possible ; but with possibilities we have not to do, but with historical factuality. Liberal theology makes three mistakes, he says : first, the misunderstanding of direct knowableness of Christ, just mentioned; secondly, mistaking the personal character of the preaching of Jesus ; thirdly, connected with the second, mistaking the eschatological, Messianic character of His entire public activity. He cites A. Schweitzer's verdict, that " the Liberal picture of Jesus is for ever destroyed." Brunner's conclusion is that the latest scientifically historic study of the 'picture' of Jesus shows Him to be neither the Liberal picture, nor the Christ-picture of orthodoxy. It is equally more concrete and living than both, and on the other hand, more strange and more inconceivable. " It is above all no longer a biography but a compression of a row of snap-shots." As regards His teaching, no longer is it construed

as a compendium of truths of reason, the Sermon on the Mount as a code of morals parallel to Kant's Ethics, the message of the Kingdom as the idea of a perfect order of ethical society, and God, the forgiving Father, as the guarantee of this ethical idea and its fulfilment. "Rather all His speeches and action are an expression of His eschatological expectation, in the middle-point of which His own person stands. He presents the final crisis: it masters His message of the coming Kingdom altogether; hence He is more than a prophet. . . . His preaching as well as His forgiveness of sins and His healing are an expression of a 'hardly to be understood' consciousness of Divine authority." Such, in brief, is Brunner's answer to the question as to 'What' Jesus was, when on earth.

It is admitted that the "fragmentariness, want of connexion, and uncertainty of the traditions in all details have become more known to us than to an earlier generation, and that this makes it harder, and yet easier, for faith," but "this research has not made impossible the affirmation that 'this is truly the Son of God'" (*ibid.*, pp. 160-165).

The final revelation of God made in the Incarnate Word that or who lived in Palestine in the years 1-30 A.D., has relations with the previous period of time—the pre-history, to use Barth's form of speech—and post-time, the 'end-of-history' (*Endgeschichte*, Ger.). At first sight it would appear that the revelation, which is one with pre-history, was not given to men B.C.,

prior to the Incarnation. But the doctrine of faith preached by this school repeats the theory of the Church which characterizes the Reformed Church theology, that the Invisible Church includes all believers, who are thereby raised into the super-historical world. Calvin taught that "the patriarchs were consorts of God's inheritance with us and hoped for the common salvation by the grace of the same Mediator" (*Inst.*, II., x., 1). The Heidelberg Catechism taught, "That God revealed the holy Gospel in Paradise and afterwards proclaimed (the Mediator) by the holy patriarchs and prophets" (*Quest.* 19). Barth develops this aspect and seeks to show that "revelation is more than eternal history: it is a point in temporal history: it is not bound to the irreversible sequence of temporal history, but around it, as a circle round a centre, it encloses all history beyond, whether divided as before and after; hence, the positive relation of all history to pre-history is related to it as the circumference to the centre, as prophecy to fulfilment, as Advent to Christmas" (*Dg.*, p. 239). The thought is rather subtle, but Vaughan's lines will make it clearer to the mind.

> I saw Eternity the other night,
> Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
> All calm, as it was bright:
> And round beneath it,
> Time in hours, days, years,
> Driven by the spheres
> Like a vast shadow moved.

The eye which sees, however, to Barth, is the eye of faith which gazes beyond space and time into the world beyond. Therefore he cites with gusto Luther's saying: "That Adam was a Christian already long before Christ's birth, for even he had that faith in Christ which we have."

Now we must turn our gaze from the past, prior to Christ's coming, to the 'end-of-history,' eschatology, as taught by the Barthians. Thurneysen's definition of history as "the whole inconceivable position between Creation and redemption in which we are found," gives a clue for the difficult teaching concerning the end of history. The course of time and its relation to eternity are viewed from the angle of the meaning of the revelation contained in the Word of God. This must always be kept in mind, for in current philosophical thought, history, or rather the problem of time, is used in quite a different sense. For instance, Bergson has sought to define the content of time as *durée* by the method of intuition. Brunner has a note on that view which enables us to see how he stands towards the Bergsonian view. "Bergson's philosophy of time is a pure æsthetic magnitude (Ger. *Groesse*), which, in opposition to spacial thinking, does not overcome space: the dynamical is only time within the spacial. Hence Bergson's philosophy is chiefly concerned with nothing else but the intuition of time. Nowhere is there mention of decision, personal reality" (*M.*, p. 347, n. 1). It is this need for decision which determines

Barth and Brunner in all their polemic against idealism. Many instances have been given of this in the preceding chapters. To give one more: "In mysticism, in idealism—even in the idealism of the philosophy of history—there is no crisis; decision, turning-point. The idea, even when viewed in historical concretion, has no relation to time." The application of that remark touches A. N. Whitehead's view of God as "the Principle of Concretion." Brunner does not mention Whitehead by name in this context (in *TC.*, p.25, n., he says, "Whitehead, one of the few metaphysicians acknowledging the æsthetic foundation of the world totality"), but he deals with that idea in a footnote (*M.*, p. 342, n. 1): "Historical *concretion* is something other than revelation. For concretion has as its correlate a universal. History is not grasped yet existentially as place of crisis so long as it is first grasped as place of concretion. The opposition concrete-abstract is an essentially theoretic one, not a practical-existential. History is concrete—indeed life in general ever is—but as place of crisis it is first qualified by revelation. In the midst between the two stands also here the practical idea, the ethical as general law. So far as it is *practical* law, crisis prevails, but so far as *universal* law is ethical idea, the character of crisis is not present. At highest can be said, the ethical law is the theoretical reflex of what revelation practically means."

This way of putting it may seem too abstract, but Brunner is speaking there to metaphysicians

in their own tongue. Religiously put, it would run something like this:—The boundary of time and eternity is strictly not measurable by the calendar, the clock, but by the moral crisis when the soul comes in front of God. As Barth says in an epigram: "God in consciousness is really God in history." We saw that, when dealing with the ethical consciousness in the chapter on Crisis. Then the question of one's existence emerges. Man feels, with Isaiah, 'undone.' And also that all the rest of the race is 'undone': "I dwell amid a people of unclean lips." The Biblical view runs that back to the Fall. And so, from faith's angle, history is a tragedy, a 'movement,' as Brunner says, with promise of 'a happy ending'—in the eternal world. Brunner states that very well. "The 'movement' is characterized by four points. Creation, as beginning and qualification of time-reality. The Fall, as disqualification of time-reality. The appearing of revelation and the coming of God as reconciliation, by which the return to the original relation is possible in the crisis, the turning-point. Lastly, redemption as the close of the possibility of decision by the real putting aside of the contradiction between man and God. These four points stand together: none is recognizable without the others: they form a unity. They are all totally invisible and only 'there' in the crisis of faith; only possible 'in Christ.' And further, they all belong to the same 'dimension': they all concern the dividing-line between time and eternity, but not as a

quiescent 'relation,' but as 'event'—*eschatological* event, pre-history, end-of-history" (*M.*, p. 348 f.).

It is at this point that most of the critics attack the Barthian theology and therefore Brunner's exposition must be given more fully, that the point be not misunderstood. It is urged that they put God outside the world entirely, in His transcendence, and that God is but 'an occasional visitor' to this world. Brunner replied: "The transcendence, the 'straight down from above,' must be expressed unmistakably. This 'from the Other side' does not remove God's immanence in the world. Even the sinful state of the world is divine activity, but sets it forth in opposition: in any case it sets forth the cleft (between man and God) as a real one, the lack of present salvation and wholesome (saving) knowledge of God. But this movement of God to the world is not physical, and the union not magical, but the presence of the Word of God, which is equally His personal presence, through which it comes to personal crisis. Only by this crisis is this event recognized as decisive. . . . But therefore no *historical event*, no 'historical personality' as such. For how would that 'cleft' be overcome which separates all history from its origin? But it is the passing over those frontier-bounds that separate all history from God: therefore that event between time and eternity 'at the very place,' in the same 'dimension' in which Creation, the Fall, and

Resurrection lie: pre-history—end-of-history" (*ibid.*, p. 351).

From this point of view we may understand Barth's vehement and frequent assertions in the *Rom.*, that the Resurrection is the Crisis of all history, the turning-point of this age and the entrance of the 'coming age.' Brunner takes up the cudgels on his friend's behalf, and in a footnote shows how so much misunderstanding has arisen. The note is couched in abstract terms, but is very valuable. "It has not been observed," he says, "that by the viewpoint 'historical event' the appearing of revelation is subordinated to a general history, whilst it is still a category for itself. It (*i.e.* the revelation-appearing) is *neither idea nor history*—directly because it is the critical event—but the Once-for-all that as such can be no part of history, but denotes the turning-point and fulfilment of history. We ought to be thankful to Barth for his stiffneckedness on this point when making distinction between 'historical event' and the Christ-fact. What is 'historical event' is perceptible as historical events are: it is *never matter for faith.* History is ever so little superordinated category of revelation, as experience is the superordinated category concerning faith. On the understanding of this relation of the matter nothing less than everything depends" (*ibid.*, p. 351, n. 1).

Earlier in this chapter we presented briefly Brunner's view regarding the content of the preaching of Jesus as eschatological in character, and also that of the Pauline-Johannine litera-

ture. It should be observed that 'eschatological' is never used by these writers in the Pre-millennial sense of the term; nor do they think the doctrine of the Lord's Return a historical curiosity tacked on to the Gospel, a survival of moods in late Judaism, probably derived from Persian sources; still less 'mania' on Jesus' part (as Volkmar said); nor do they share Albert Schweitzer's rationalistic interpretation of eschatology. No: Brunner says outright that the New Testament is eschatological through and through, and that faith worthy of the name is as necessary as that a man should have a head on. Barth has always had a leaning that way ever since he read the elder Blumhardt's works. The very title of their paper, *Zwischen den Zeiten* (Between the Ages) shows how they regard the present interval between Christ's resurrection and its eternal fulfilment, as an 'interim period,' as Johannes Weiss phrased it. "Only this is meant by hope: the end of this age," says Brunner. "Beyond this eternal flux of Heraclitus, beyond this world of history which as such is only a bit of piecework and remains such, beyond this never-ending process that never gets to its goal, is the believer's hope. This piecework of history which continues irrevocably under the lordship of the evil Prince of this world, stands under sin and death and forces out of the believer's heart the cry for another world" (*MW.*, p. 258 f.).

It is from such a deep *Heimweh* that Barth's polemic against the present forms of civilization,

and the easygoing ways of so many Churches, gets its passion. This explains his attacks on so much of present-day Church life: 'religion' he calls it, though 'religiosity' would be the better term in English. H. R. Mackintosh has accurately interpreted Barth's polemic against 'churchianity.' "The Church, in Barth's view of it, is as equivocal a fact as religion itself. The institution we know belongs, like all earthly things, to the present age, the æon of flesh and sin, and is no more than a more or less perfected organization which exists to advance certain great human interests. Hence, like the world, it stands in absolute antithesis to God; so far from being the Kingdom of God, it is the Tower of Babel. Not that the sect is worthier—on the contrary, 'Better with the Church in hell than with the Pietists of higher or lower type in a heaven—which does not exist!' There is no evading the truth that the more 'efficient' and 'up-to-date' the Church becomes, the more it is the object of Divine judgment and rejection. If this means that in proportion as the Church comes to be complacent, galvanised, or self-deifying, it has lost touch with the purposes for which Christ gathered round Him a fellowship of faith and love; if it means that men as such, however much they 'get together,' cannot of themselves heal the hurt of even one soul, but that God alone can save and bless, we shall all agree, though we may ask whether, in asserting so solemn but also so patent a truth, there was need for wild and

chaotic words" (*Expos. Times*, Sept. 1928, p. 539).

With this view of eschatology, the Last Things, instead of being relegated to the few closing pages of text-books of systematic theology, are brought into the very centre of themes of discourse from the pulpit. The 'man of faith' is ever the man of hope, looking for the completion of the redemption which has only just begun in the sphere of time and space. Passages in the New Testament, especially in Paul's writings, gain thereby a new force. "Now is salvation nearer than when we first believed": "we await the redemption of our body": "having begun a good work God will perfect it unto the Day of Christ." On this latter text, Barth's thoughts are clearly expressed. "Reconciliation points beyond itself to redemption. But now and here, within these bounds (*e.g.*, the Day of Christ), the work produced in the same Lord, the work of reconciliation, must be perfected in us through His Spirit. Here one observes what scope is set for our life's day. Not our day of death with its blessed departure from this world forms those bounds, but the Day of Christ Jesus; His victory in this world, its new-creation by Him, our day of death only so far as it does not signify *our flight*, but the Coming of the Lord in the world of transience" (*Philipp.*, p. 10).

Redemption then is "positively the realization of the vocation of man (which has become not weak simply by sin, but even frustrated) in a new

creation, in manifest accomplishment of reconciliation." This sets bounds to the work of 'kultur.' In other words, the development of human society is coloured by this eschatological reference. 'Kultur' to the German mind signifies "the idea of the realm of ends and the purpose of the norms by which human conduct lets itself be guided." Barth has a message on that relation of God's realm of ends and man's. In that message the leading ideas which have been illustrated in the whole of Part II. of this book, are gathered together. "The relation which binds the Church to 'kultur' is that of criticism. On God and His fulfilling Yes and Amen the Church hopes. She cannot stand by at the building of the Tower of Babel whose summit shall reach to heaven. She hopes in God for men, but not in men, not even in men of piety, not even at all in man being able by God's help to build and complete that Tower. She neither believes in the divinity of the human spirit nor in that of nature, much less still in the alleged synthesis produced between the two. She takes death too seriously to expect that her human-ness can be aught else but hope of resurrection. She awaits her Redeemer's word, 'Lo, I make all things new.' With this eschatological reserve she sets herself to society. Not from depreciation of the work of civilization, but in the highest valuation of it, for she sees the aims of civilization. Not from pessimism, but from extravagant hope. Not as a 'wet-blanket,' a 'spoil-sport,' but knowing that art

and science, business and politics, technique and education are really a sport, a serious game, but a game, that is to say, a picturesque but unpremeditated doing that has its meaning not in any attainable ends, but on what it signifies. . . . The Church renders society no service if, for fear of disturbing herself and making herself disliked, she does not make this reserve prevail, if she brings not the comfort and warning of eternity to expression, in her attitude and teaching" (*TK.*, pp. 383-384).

# PART III

## CRITICAL

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE DIALECTICAL METHOD

In the previous chapters we have had mention of the mode of thinking, the dialectical, which characterizes most of the members of this school, and the discussion of that method was deferred until their message had been presented. Barth has been the leader in setting the fashion, though Karl Heim had made use of it prior to Barth's rise to fame. The use of dialectic has been hotly debated, and several times Barth has had to defend himself and justify his practice. The 'Romans' book was a veritable hedge of thorns to the average critic, and it is noticeable that this is the point most dwelt upon by writers in other countries when dealing with Barth's works. Barth himself said, as far back as 1922, that the most frequent complaint made against his method was that men felt it was a new mode of thinking and only a great intellectual game which Hegel had played much better, and that it led nowhere. It was like a game of football, a chasing from side to side, up and down for the elusive ball, truth.

Again, when speaking on a Roman Catholic's book, Barth meets the criticism that his method is dialectical by saying that it is made into a bug-bear to frighten children with, as though some horror of lower than Christian philosophy lurked behind it. He rightly points out that the Reformers, Luther, and especially Calvin (cf. *de Fide, Inst.*, III., ii.), used the method, and he might have gone back to the schoolmen, Albertus Magnus and *his* teacher, Abelard, with his *Sic et Non*, as masters in this branch of thinking. The late Lord Balfour, whose *Defence of Philosophic Doubt* deals with some of the problems Barth discusses, is perhaps the best British example of the dialectician, though natural theology, and not revealed, was his main theme. Lord Balfour and his brother-in-law, Henry Sidgwick, would justify this method as showing that reason could not alone solve the problem of the foundations on which convictions rest ultimately. Indeed, Lord Balfour went so far as to say they were not rational grounds at all, but "a kind of inward inclination or impulse" (cf. *op. cit.*, ed. 1879, p. 316 f.). Sidgwick also may help us to grasp Barth's viewpoint in using dialectic. In a letter on Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, dealing with 'the fight with death,' which the poem so powerfully represents, he says that at the Stanza (cxxiv.):

> If e'er when faith had fallen asleep
> I heard a voice "believe no more,"
> And heard an ever-breaking shore
> That tumbled in the Godless deep:

> A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And like a man in wrath the heart
> Stood up and answered, "I have felt."

Sidgwick says, "If the stanzas had stopped here, we should have shaken our heads and said, 'Feeling must not usurp the function of Reason. Feeling is not knowing. It is the duty of a rational being to follow truth wherever it leads." "But," adds Sidgwick, "the poet knows that this usurpation by Feeling of the function of Reason is too bold and confident: in the next stanza he gives the turn to humility in the protest of Feeling. . . .

> 'No, like a child in doubt and fear;
> But that blind clamour made me wise;
> Then was I as a child that cries,
> But, crying, knows his father near:
> And what I am beheld again
> What is, and no man understands. . . .'

"These lines I can never read without tears. I feel in them the indestructible and inalienable minimum of faith which humanity cannot give up because it is necessary for life" (*H. Sidgwick, A Memoir*, pp. 539-541). There we have a mood which admirably catches Barth's tone and almost repeats his phrases about the fight with death and the intolerable crisis which is felt when life is viewed 'existentially,' 'necessary for life.'

Before dealing with the method it is well to observe the *milieu* where Barth's work has lain

and still lies, and the training in Neo-Kantian circles, at Marburg, where dialectical thinking forms part of the curriculum. In the Rhine valley, and especially in Westphalia, the Roman Catholics are very strong, and the teaching of St Thomas Aquinas is the standard of orthodox teaching. Thomism uses the dialectical method, thesis and antithesis, *pro and contra* are put alongside and propositions are exhausted in discussion. Barth thus uses a method which is in vogue, and seeks to present a reason for Reformed Theology, an apologetic in the manner of the Church he opposes. Then the Neo-Kantian philosophical discipline has a difficult part of Kant's teaching to expound when, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant deals with the antinomies, the paralogisms of pure reason (*cf.* Bk. II., "Of the Dialectical Procedure of Pure Reason," in Bohn, pp. 237-410). To the student of Kant the dialectical method will be quite familiar. As this work is intended for the average minister and educated layman who has not gone through Kant, our interpretation must be of an elementary kind.

We collect some of the scattered passages where Barth explains his method. The starting-point is doubt, not faith. As Abelard put it: "By doubting we come to inquiry, by inquiring we perceive the truth"—if we inquire long enough! Though there is little of a biographic nature in Barth's writings, between the lines one can surmise that he has gone through a period of scepticism, and two writers, Overbeck and

Feuerbach, both masters of dialectic, have much to do in creating Barth's style of argumentation. Often Barth quotes Overbeck's term, *Urgeschichte*, and its counterpart, 'The Wisdom of Death,' which signifies the limits of human knowledge and points to its transcendental source. Overbeck, though a theological professor, was, like Rabbi Duncan, a philosophical sceptic. But Barth says: "The man who spoke so feelingly of death must have had a fruitful, living, original idea. 'Yon-side' of plain question must be an answer, 'yon-side' of nothingness a new start, 'yon-side' of the wilderness to which we are directed must be a promised land." Feuerbach, in translating of whose work, *The Essence of Christianity*, George Eliot lost her Christian faith, had a deep influence in shaping Barth's dialectic. Feuerbach is the theme of an essay, and these passages are quoted by Barth: "True dialectic is no monologue of the solitary thinker with himself, it is a dialogue between an I and a Thou." "An object is only given to me where a real object is given, working on me, where my self-activity—when I go forth from the standpoint of the thinker—finds in the activity of another being its limits—its contradiction. The idea of the object is originally not other than the idea of another I: thereby is the idea of the object generally mediated by the idea of the Thou, the objective I." And the method of Feuerbach was "to negate only to affirm: I negate the fantastic reflection of theology and religion in order to

affirm the real nature of man" (Feuerbach, *Philosophy of the Future*, pp. 41, 68; *Nature of Religion*, p. 14). In meeting Feuerbach's view that theology is really anthropology, Barth takes the dialectical way of reversing the thesis, theology is *not* anthropology, because God and man are separated by 'an infinite qualitative difference.' And so from human nature no God can be constructed: God must reveal Himself. This is the bed-rock of the Barthian theology.

The language of dialectic is that of paradox. Paradox, as we saw earlier, was the juxtaposition of an opinion in apparent disagreement with another opinion alongside of it, implicated with it. Examples given by Barth are: the glory of God in creation and yet His concealment; death and its transitory quality alongside of the majesty of another life; man's creation in the image of God conjoined with his state as a fallen being; sin, so awful, yet only known when it is forgiven. In God we see the same contrasts. Creation and Providence; grace and judgment; promise and fulfilment; forgiveness and penalty—"Thou forgavest them though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." In man's religious experience the same speech of paradox has to be used. Flesh with spirit; faith and obedience; freedom, yet 'under law still'; autonomy and heteronomy; 'justified, yet still a sinner'—these are examples frequently appearing in Barth's and Brunner's works. We meet with paradox

in all thinking on the ultimate things. So Browning:

> The evil is null, is nought,
> Is silence implying sound,

and Tennyson's Anthem for Balliol College:

> We feel we are nothing—for all is Thou and in Thee;
> We feel we are something—*that* also has come from Thee;
> We know we are nothing—but Thou wilt help us to be.

And Brunner, when meditating on death and the life hereafter, speaks paradoxically and dialectically when he says: "We know not what lies 'yon-side' outside of death: we cannot represent how life looks that is not stamped with death. Only in helpless negation can we express it which says no more than that we have become somewhat aware of the negations which death brings into our life. Negation of the negations is the formula of our thoughts of eternal life. 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.'"

The method of dialectic is to counter the No by its opposite Yes: the thesis by the antithesis. As Barth says: "Our task is to interpret the Yes and the No and the No by the Yes without delaying more than a moment in either a fixed Yes or a fixed No." He uses the procedure of the examination room where questions are put requiring answers. The answer con-

tains the question and the question implies the answer. We pass from one side to the other, and often the No is but a concealed Yes. Again, and often in the Romans Commentary, Barth has recourse to algebraical formulæ. The minus sign placed before the series of plus terms enclosed in brackets, changes the values, and conversely, the plus sign transforms the minus sign. Every positive implies a negative and every negative hints at a positive. Take, for instance, the word 'nothing.' That suggests 'thing' though it negates it. In philosophy the only way to counter scepticism is to be sceptical of scepticism itself, to carry doubt through till it is the herald of faith itself. F. C. S. Schiller says: "The true *apologia* for doubt is the one which insists on its positive value and its affiliations to inquiry, research, and discovery. It is the condition of spiritual progress. So long as what appears is accepted without question, there can be no progress in knowledge, because there is no case for investigation" (*Problems of Belief*, p. 19: the whole chapter is well worth study). From that point of view Barth is quite justified in 'getting a move on' in theology, which for so long has been in the position of a 'stalemate.' That was just his aim by his flaunting paradoxes in the 'Romans' book.

One is not quite sure which of the recognized methods of dialectic, the Platonic-Socratic, the Aristotelian or the Hegelian, Barth prefers. Sometimes he writes as if truth lies, as with

Aristotle, in the mean between two extremes. But his criticism of the dialectic of Schleiermacher fastens precisely on the fallacy of the mean: the opposites are brought together, until there is neither a Yes nor a No—a kind of 'no-man's-land' between the contending parties which neither can claim. As someone pithily put it: He could understand the sheep and the goats being separated at the Last Judgment, but where would alpacas be placed? At other times Barth seems to incline to Hegel's neat scheme: thesis, antithesis, synthesis, which combines the preceding two in a higher unity. But the prevailing dualism of the Barthian, and the Biblical, doctrine cannot carry that forward into the unknown world where the things which jar in time will be composed into harmony. Usually Barth takes another line; he passes back behind the contraries to the previous state from which they emerged into contradiction. "The truth," he says sometimes, "lies not in the Yes and not in the No, but in the knowledge and the beginning from which the Yes and the No arise" (*WG.*, p. 72 f.). And again: "Our Yes towards life from the very beginning carries within it the Divine No which breaks forth from the antithesis and points away from what now was the thesis to the original and final synthesis. The No is not the last and highest truth, but the call from home which comes in answer to our asking for God in the world" (*ibid.*, p. 312). Here Barth's thinking seems somewhat confused: for the original synthesis is put as if

behind and then, in Hegelian wise, as ahead. What he means is clear and that is that not in time, not on this plane of earth, but 'from God who is our Home' prior to, subsequent to, Creation—"Not now, but in the Better Land" —the contradictions will be solved.

It is at this point that we can see why philosophical theologians quarrel with the "theology of dialectic and crisis." The philosopher seeks to unify all knowledge: this theology stands all through for the dualism which springs from the axiom, "the finite is not competent enough for the infinite." The one problem that Barth's keen mind, and, be it said, devout heart, is concerned with, is the problem how the Creator, 'The Majestic and Terrible God,' can reveal Himself, and how that revelation can ever be put into the 'earthen vessels' of human speech. He cannot bear the thin abstractions which pass for descriptions of God, 'the good, the beautiful and the true,' so dear to Plato and Plotinus and men like Dean Inge and R. S. Franks in England. He is with Augustine, who had been soaked in Neoplatonism, after passing through the 'no-man's-land' of Manichæism, who could urge Porphyry to consider "God's grace resident in Jesus Christ: His assuming of body and soul being the greatest example of grace that ever was" (*de Civit. Dei*, X., 29).

The dangers incident to the use of the dialectical method have not altogether been escaped by Barth. One danger is that it tends to confuse the minds which have not undergone a rigorous

drill in the logic of contradiction. Barth may reply, that he was writing *Romans* for such trained theological minds, and it may be added that in his more popular commentary on Philippians he seldom resorts to that method. Yet he is tempted, at times, to resort to paradox, even there. Another danger, to which a great English dialectician was liable, Cardinal Newman, is that the contrary to the religious position may be put so strongly that one feels it has not been overcome, but remains master of the field. Professor Willy Luettge has pointed that out in a brochure, *Dialectic of the Idea of God in the Theology of the Present Day* (not as yet Englished: Tübingen, 1925, 27 pp.). Luettge says: "When Barth, with his basal thought, 'God's eternity is in itself the eternal No to all the life of time,' sought to 'develop the deepest impulse of faith,' this over-emphasis leads Barth to the verge of denying the God-faith in its depths; that Barth has drawn the 'No' near to nihilistic mysticism, has forsaken the proper meaning of revelation, thrust the seriousness of guilt behind the problematic and tragic of finitude, and impugned the ethical content of knowledge." Since then the First Dogmatic has appeared and Barth has made good use of the criticism Luettge made.

Another danger is that one may take a side, the No, or Yes, without carrying the dialogue through. This is precisely what Lenin did, with such disastrous consequences to religion in Russia. We repeat Lenin's remarks,

previously given: "Dialectics shows how opposites can be and actually are identical: under what conditions they are transformed into each other and become identical, and why human reason must regard these opposites not as dead and fixed, but as vital, conditioned, movable and in process of transformation into one another. The condition precedent to any knowledge of the processes of the world in its 'automatic motion,' in its spontaneous development, in its vital being, is to conceive of them as a unity of opposites, for 'evolution means, struggle of opposites.' Barth carries this process through, on the lines Lenin indicated. But as a Christian, taking his start from the Bible revelation, the precedent condition ('presupposition' is Barth's term) is not that of materialistic science, with its 'automatic motion, evolution,' but the Creator who is also the Redeemer. But this use of dialectic by Lenin, repeated parrot-wise by Communists on the Continent, justifies Barth, notwithstanding the dangers of the method, in showing how it may help to develop the sense of sin and prepare for the Mediator. Danger is not a thing that Barth shies at: rather, he welcomes it, for, quoting Overbeck, he says, "A Christianity setting itself heroically against every opposing time—only such can avoid the fate of Jesuitry." And in the same context he says, "The religious problems are to be set on entirely new foundations eventually at the cost of what hitherto has been called 'religion'" (*TK.*, p. 23). This is why

eschatology plays so great a part in the dialectic: the answer lies beyond this world. "A theology which would venture to become eschatology would be not only a new theology, but also a new Christianity, yea, a new being (*Wesen*), itself a piece of the 'last things,' high as a steeple above the Reformation and all so-called 'religious movements'" (*ibid.*, p. 25).

From this standpoint the apparently enigmatic passage in *Romans*, on iii. 31, "Do we abolish law by faith?" is full of insight. This is the presupposition of the Christian's position.

"The resurrection in history which was posited in Jesus, as the presupposition in the connexion of the 'given,' the paradox of faith inserted in the psychical development in man appears as a ghost swallowing down all that lives. The world vanishes in God's presence, the creation in sight of redemption, experience before knowing, content before form, the Law face to face with the trueness of the Lawgiver—a trueness which is alone real and yet only visible to faith. How shall we guard ourselves before this representation of the reproach of a gnostic dualism bound up with it? We cannot guard against it at all if the radicalism of the truth here emerging is not altogether radically understood. A negation which persisted as a negation alongside of the position would not be a genuine critical negation: it must presently again be negated itself. Resurrection as alien history, alongside the other histories, would be no resurrection, for what should then rise

again? Presupposition, which did not prove itself and fulfil itself in all the 'given' would not be the last presupposition. And the paradox which attached itself as a particular occurrence in the usual psychic occurrences (even in extraordinary fashion, as somehow the demoniacal), would not then be paradox. The Other over against all existing, known, material, temporal, human, from which we come here, would be in no respect wholly other, if in every relation it were not known for such in its original, perfecting, ultimate, affirming significance" (*Rom.*, p. 90).

If the above passage is not clear to the reader, a word on the logical relations of position and negation may throw needed light. A saying of Fichte's runs: "Anything that for us is *something* is so only in so far as it is *not* something else: all position is only possible through negation," and Hegel supplements it by saying: "The finite consists in relation to its other which is its negation and presents itself as its bounds" (*Encycl.*, Sec. 28). If then the position is that of life after the resurrection, then all life prior to the resurrection is negative: doomed to death. And if the other of the finite is the Infinite, then God is the boundary line of the finite: the limit, the end. From those two statements of Fichte and Hegel all the logical positions assumed by Barth in constructing his theology can be grounded. One can now better understand his use of a definition of crisis of which mention has already been made: "Crisis is a

dialectic conception which not only allows, but calls for its opposite: that this negation, which *removes* . . . may *restore*: the question may be its own *answer* and the argument against may be argument *for*." This may sound like a quibble, but in algebra the negative of a negative is a positive, and applying that mode to the theme of life's crisis, viz., death, we may say: If death is the negation of life and the resurrection is the negation of death, then the life after death has triumphed over death: "He dieth no more." The presupposition is the theological position, that Christ is prior to the time series as the Eternal Logos, and superior to all in time by virtue of His resurrection.

Barth has no illusions as to the adequacy of this dialectical method as a proof. No word of man's can do that, God's Word in revelation alone will suffice. As he puts it (*WG.*, p. 176 f.): "We are not capable of making *reality* correspond to what we say. . . . God alone can do that. We shall not settle the mind of God, however neatly we settle the dialectic of the thought of God. That the question is the answer, the No the Yes, that doom is grace, that death is life—this may all be true, but it is not true because we think it and say it. . . . There is no way from us to God, not even a *via negativa*—not even a *via dialectica* nor *paradoxa*. The god who stood at the end of some human way—even of *this* way, would not be *God*."

It may be asked why Barth takes up such a difficult method of argumentation, if it cannot

satisfy. The answer must be found in the general scepticism on the Continent which must doubt its doubts through, and this method may enable men to repeat the experience Tennyson described of his friend :

> He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
> He would not make his judgment blind,
> He faced the spectres of the mind
> And laid them : thus he came at length
> To find a stronger faith his own ;
> And Power was with him in the night,
> Which makes the darkness and the light,
> And dwells not in the light alone,
> But in the darkness and the cloud.
>
> (*In Mem.*, stanza xcv.).

The other answer is contained in the *Dg.*, which is an exhaustive attempt to think through the idea of revelation and the possibility of man's receiving an authentic Word of God which, as a preacher, he has to proclaim—if he can !

Barth devotes several pages to show how, of necessity, speech in dogmatics must be broken, paradoxical, dialectical, when the mind seeks to think together the varied aspects under which God has revealed Himself. " Dogmatic thinking is conversational, questioning and answering, answering and questioning, and only in this movement producing knowledge." It is no mere verbal play : the thinker must be a believer and obedient : realizing that his very existence depends upon his carrying through his critical enterprise. And because God, the object of this thinking, is also the pure irremovable

subject, the thinking must be led by God in the thinker, God the Holy Ghost.

There are thus two engaged in this dialogue, God and man. Like Jacob they wrestle with one another, and are not to be parted: word meets with counter-word, question with answer, address with response. The root-question from which all other questions take their rise and by which alone they are resolved, is the question as to the union of qualitative differences, represented in the name Jesus Christ, God *and* man. Barth says such dialectical thinking is unavoidable, and when completed is but fragmentary. Man is ever *viator*, never *comprehensor*: on the way but, on earth, never at the end. The perfect theology will only be obtained when we are 'home' and 'know as we have been known.' Hence all our life here is one of tension: passing from one pole to another: never in equipoise (cf. *Dg.*, pp. 454, 456 ff.).

The tension and pathos are well described by Brunner. "We have God's presence in Christ in the breaking and unveiling through the reality of this sinful world, His light as broken through the density of the world's atmosphere. We know the gracious God at the place of terror, at the Cross. Therefore faith is even the form of a having in not-having, certainty in uncertainty, comfort in despair, joyous confidence in repentance, the love of God in the fear of God, God's immediacy in perfect mediateness, the Divine near word as letter, word of a book, the fellowship with men in the

Church. Here again stand the Mediator and faith in Him in the midst; *between* Him who is and who will be, imaging both in His form. Just because He is the Mediator, having part in both, must He show forth both sides. He has part in the sinful, depraved, actual world and has part in the divine eternal world: He is the bridge between both: but the bridge is to be crossed.

"The contradiction which is the characteristic of all evangelical utterances of faith, the dialectic, the Yes in the No and the No in the Yes that is so hard for us to understand in thought—ah! still more so in life—the refraction of the sinning world on the divine light of truth, is also the augury of the eschatological. Therefore Christian faith points beyond itself to the End, to the resurrection of the flesh, because in itself it is a contradiction. Christ the crucified can not be the end of the way of God: faith as the 'reading through a dark glass' cannot be the goal of the revelation of truth. The dialectical-contradictory asks for a solution: but such a solution of which no man, not even in thought, is master. The dialectic of faith, in distinction from the dialectical philosophy, remains unsolved. Its remaining is the same as the waiting for the redemption which God alone can give. Not as though this hope attains to faith: faith is nothing else but the assurance of the coming. *As such* it is power and joy, as such it is present possession. But *only* as such" (*M.*, p. 483 f.).

We may round off this chapter by quoting Richard Hooker. "Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High: whom although to know be life, and joy to make mention of His Name; yet our soundest knowledge is to know that we know Him not as indeed He is, neither can know Him: and our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence, when we confess without confession that His glory is inexplicable, His greatness above our capacity and reach. He is above, and we upon earth; therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few" (*Eccles. Pol.*, Bk. I., cap. ii., sec. 2).

# CHAPTER XIV

## CRITICISM OF BARTH'S VIEWS

THE leading ideas of the group around Barth have been presented in the preceding chapters chiefly in their own words: it remains for us, in this closing chapter, to indicate the main lines or points of criticism which they have called forth. The literature in reply would fill many a book-shelf; much of it has passed out of date owing to the shifting of emphasis as Barth has moved on to other points and aspects of theology. The earlier Barth, who wrote the *Romans*, whose attack on current-day theology created such a furore, in his second phase has applied his dialectical method to thoughts on revelation, as a preliminary to his Dogmatik on the Word of God. There has been a perceptible change in his style of writing: some of the phrases, such as God, 'the Wholly Other,' faith, as 'stepping out into empty space, vacuity,' seldom appear in his later writing. The earlier style of expression bore the marks of the exaggerated impressionism which had to shout and scream, to explode in violent paradoxes, amid the whistling and screaming of shells and Minnenwerfer in war-time. The journalistic training in the office of the 'liberal' theological paper, *Die*

*Christliche Welt*, was put to good service as arresting public attention, though not precisely the kind of speech suitable to serious theological discussion. Von Harnack and Jülicher aptly said the earlier edition of the *Rom.* was like 'Marcionitish sheet-lightning,' and the contents, 'desperado theology,' 'yeasty ideas not clarified enough,' 'futurist picture-painting.' Others have likened the style to 'Véry lights bursting in a foggy atmosphere,' and H. R. Mackintosh speaks of Barth as 'a great volcanic soul.' The nearest British parallel is Thomas Carlyle, in his *Sartor Resartus*, but Bernard Shaw's bluntness can be matched by Barth. Sometimes a whole page of the *Romans* pours out a stream of questions like the rattle of shot from a Lewis gun. He had the ready writer's knack of hitting off a situation by a biting phrase. Faith was a 'shell-hole for God to fill.' Herrmann's autopistism is 'rat-poison.' The limit death sets was expressed as 'the death-line,' the 'electric barbed-wire fence,' 'the glacial line,' and the future as 'the coming ice-age.' And many of the *cliches*, 'existentially,' 'sickness unto death,' 'the down-stroke on the horizontal,' were all lifted from other writers with true journalistic skill. Apt too, though slightly irreverent, was his simile of the Holy Spirit in the Church, as 'heavenly lightning down a kitchen chimney.'

That mode of speech has almost gone. Indeed Barth says he is now somewhat unpopular among former friends because he has become

'orthodox,' and his style declined to 'scholasticism.' His excuse is 'that for every season there is a time,' and the new situation after the War, and his new duties as a theological Professor justify his change of forms of expression. He has at times become purposely obscure, in order to avoid the apish copying of his mannerisms. One complaint now made by his opponents is that he has brought into use the method of 'double truths' in his way of arguing: an abstruse mode of expression which only the learned can understand, and a more popular form of writing for the 'lay' folks. This must be said for him that he has no ambition to found any theological party: truth is his main concern. Of his *Romans* he said, "For the success of my book I have been punished with the existence of regular Barthians. And it is a real question whether there is as much joy in heaven as there is on earth about the progress of the Barthian School." He fears systematization: and that makes it a difficulty to extricate his views, without bringing in the matrix as well in which his thoughts are embedded. Another complaint is that he has too bitter a tone to men whose views he dislikes; that his irony is too piercing for religious debate; and that great terms, like God, Word of God, Revelation, Resurrection, Yon-side, are thrown out without careful definition, as though their meaning were self-evident. His brilliancy often carries one away: in cooler moments something of the glamour has gone.

When we pass from the form to the content,

the criticism increases in volume. The dialectical mode of thinking is a prominent point of attack. Its abstract logical form makes it a poor medium for plain Gospel truth. It inverts the usual line of thinking, proceeding from the known to the unknown: we start with God as the Great Unknown, half-known through His revelation, for He is as much concealed in it as revealed, and faith is put as opposed to reason, whereas in the New Testament it is the opposite of sight. This fondness for abstract thinking on the part of Barth may make him uncongenial to the British 'common-sense': we can follow Bishop Butler when he says, "Reason . . . is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning any thing, even revelation itself" (*Anal.*, Pt. II., cap. 3). And the 'judicious Hooker' expresses our way of proceeding (and he dealt with Calvinism of a severer type than Barth's) when, as a preacher, he asks, "May we cause our faith without reason to appear reasonable in the eyes of men?" (*E.P.*, III., cap. 8). This latter point is made by Otto Ritschl, when reviewing the *Dg.* (*Theolztg.*, 1928, No. 10, col. 221), for he points out that if the preacher, as dogmatist, is ever so sure by faith, he has to speak as a man with one foot at least in this world where the men of his audience live, and if these are to be won, it must be by a recognition of some secular thinking being valid: and Barth's sweeping No! against this world, makes it harder to gain a hearing.

Other points raised against the paradoxical,

dialectical method are still more serious. Lüttge's criticism has already been given (p. 234); others writing on this aspect show, that if a position implies a negation, and a negation a position, then faith carries disbelief with it, theism, atheism, and if one member of the pair comes to be doubted, the result may be disastrous to religion itself. And then it is pointed out, especially by T. Bohlin, the Swede, that there is much confusion in Barth's presentation of his argument. Bohlin asks, "How can the Eternal be grasped and defined other than as pure abstract in metaphysical modes? The relation of man to God becomes a special case of opposition of abstract concepts, philosophically understood, viz., the concepts of time and eternity. The God-faith thus becomes an audacity of thinking, a postulate of thought: the object of faith a paradox, a logical-metaphysical absurdity. The upshot being, that sin appears by this mode of thinking to be no longer a religious-ethical matter, but metaphysical evil, and thus the ideas of Creation and Redemption from which the relation of man to the Creator is construed, has religiously no more meaning" (vide *Glaube und Offenbarung*, Ger. trans. from Swedish, Furche, Berlin, 1928).

It would take us too far to bring out that this dualism between faith, in touch with a transcendent world of revelation, and reason, shut up in the world of ideas and sense perception, is the fatal inheritance of Barth from the Neo-Kantian School in which he was trained. The

explanation can be seen if one follows out the criticism of that philosophical school given by James Lindsay. "The dilemma of Neo-Kantism is that it says, practically, that we know that there is infinite knowledge, and that there are ideas, but that we, with our finite, discursive thought, can never reach them—the serious practical result of which would seem to be that object and knowledge, form and content, being-in-itself and culture-consciousness never do, in Neo-Kantism, come together in their proper mode or relation of hanging all together, at least never in such a way as to meet the demands of philosophical requirement" (*Encyc. Rel. and Ethics*, vol. 9, p. 307*a*). And W. P. Paterson counters the Neo-Kantian conclusion that "God is beyond the reach of the understanding" when he says, "It is inconceivable that Isaiah or Paul, even if they could have studied the *Critique of Pure Reason*, would have admitted that they had been mistaken in supposing that their faculties could reach so far as the Divine Being, and could know His purposes of judgment and mercy" (*The Nature of Religion*, p. 163). To this, of course, Barth may reply by saying that by revelation, and not by reason they obtained this knowledge, but then, God spoke to the mind, and mind had the capacity to read sense in the Divine disclosure. It is most interesting and profitable, in this connexion, to go over again the debate between Dean Mansel and F. D. Maurice, where the same points as to the limitations of human knowledge and the possibility

of revelation now being discussed in Germany were thrashed out in this country. The pity is, that Barth and his friends seem unaware of British contributions on this philosophical problem (*vide* "Bampton Lectures," 1858; *Maurice's Life*, vol. II., cap. x.).

The purely theological aspects of Barth's doctrines must now be our theme of criticism. The book from which his views are taken is his last, the *Dg.* It will be well to consider the following points: his view of Scripture, as the Word of God; secondly, the doctrine of God in Three Persons; thirdly, the doctrine of man in relation to God; fourthly, the view of History with eschatology. The standard of criticism can be but one, the Word of God as written in the Bible. And the form of criticism will be his own, 'a theology of correction.' He asserts that he has no system, that no system is possible owing to the brokenness of human speech on so sublime a theme, and in sketching the 'plan' of a Dogmatik he expressly shuns the use of the word 'system,' "because a point of union belongs to a system concerning which the thinker deems himself able to dispose, which is not the case in Dogmatik. Its point of union is the word of God; we cannot dispose concerning it, but it disposes concerning our thinking" (*Dg.*, p. 427 f.). The standard adopted is his own: "The standard is the revelation attested by Scripture, the dogmatic norm, the law according to which Dogmatik judges" (*ibid.*, p. 428).

i. *Scripture as the Word of God.*

Barth starts from his Church standpoint, that in Scripture is to be found all that is needed to hear the Word of God, without resort to any other source. Calvin's statement is cited, as the strongest and finest: "The highest proof of Scripture everywhere is taken from the Person of God speaking" (*Inst.*, I., vii., 4). Barth's one theme is that God speaks: that He speaks His word in three forms, first, directly in revelation to apostles and prophets; then indirectly in the written records of that revelation; thirdly, more indirectly through Christian preaching. Since it is *God* that speaks, there is no need for any other proof of the Divine action. All apologetical efforts are needless and without value, and for that reason all attempts from history and psychology to found a science of religion can only be preliminary, propædeutical, and are useless in the absence of faith.

To that view one may reply that Barth is right in what he affirms and wrong in what he denies. For there is ample evidence in Scripture that prophets and apostles gained knowledge, speech from God, indirectly through nature and God's working in history. Jeremiah's opening vision was of the 'twig' of the 'awake' tree: David's meditation on the starry heavens (Ps. viii.) and the sunrise (Ps. xix.): Our Lord's rebuke to men for not being able to 'discern the signs of the times,' are examples of the indirect speech of God and the use of nature and history as lesson-books.

On the relation of God's original word to the prophet and its enshrinement within human, written words, Barth shows some vacillation. On the one hand, he admits a relative right of the doctrine of verbal inspiration; on the other hand, on the same page (344) he says, "We know that the Bible is one thing, revelation another," and elsewhere he says, "the Word of God appears even to-day in the Bible, and apart from this appearing it (the Bible) is not the word of God but one book as other books." And again, "Scripture is the Word of God so far as it is witness of revelation." But once again he asserts, "Every part of Scripture is in itself complete Word of God" (pp. 63, 134, 340). He comes down at last on the side of modern study of the letter of Scripture, and says "historism must be allowed to say its say out with reason and right as to the Biblical text," but even then runs back to his doctrine of Crisis, *i.e.*, that behind the letter we are put in decision before God's revelation (p. 345 f.). He reveals his ignorance of the history of the rise of the doctrine of verbal inspiration when he says it arose in the seventeenth century, and was "unknown to the Reformers, even Calvin," for it was known to Flacius, who died in 1575. Barth, however, renders a good service by his close joining of the Old and New Testaments, especially in view of many attempts, as by Ritschl, to disjoin them, but it is to be wished that he had studied them afresh and not through the eyes of the doctrinal theses of the Reformers.

And it is all to the good that he can cite Luther's dictum, "What does not teach Christ is not apostolic, even though St Peter or Paul teach it. Again, what preaches Christ, that would be apostolic, though Judas, Hannas, Pilate, and Herod did it" (Erlang. Ed. 63, p. 157). Barth re-echoes those words when he says (to the dislike of Biblicists), "The Biblical texts will, even as witnesses, be not God's words save as speaking to us is Jesus Christ Himself as such, and becoming heard by us, becoming revealed and giving Himself to be discovered" (p. 345). And when Barth insists that what revelation means is the direct address of God to the soul, from mind to mind, for which must not be substituted vague words like 'life,' or 'thrills,' 'the holy,' however 'startling and overwhelming' (a hit at Otto), he will win consent. For what men need is "God giving Himself, working by His word," that they may "hear the very living words of God," as Calvin said (*Inst.*, I., vii., 1; *Dg.*, pp., 38, 63).

It is, however, a great defect that Barth's emphasis on the absoluteness of revelation prevents his dealing with the converse aspect that the appropriation of that revelation by men, believing men, can only be piecemeal and fragmentary. He is so afraid of allowing a gradual revelation, lest it may make revelation relative and a growing quantity, that he says bluntly: "God alone reveals Himself or He is not revealed at all. . . . In His speech is manifest who He is: if He is not revealed as the Lord then He is not

revealed. But God's lordship, sovereignty (Gr. *basileia*), is an indivisible magnitude not capable of quantity. Hence we must advance (the proposition): If He be not altogether revealed, then He is not revealed at all; if He be not altogether known, then He is not known at all. Here holds Either-Or: God is altogether in His revelation" (p. 135). On the next page, when discussing Thomas Aquinas' word—"Every truth, by whomsoever spoken, is from the Holy Spirit"—as against 'natural revelation,' Barth says: "The truth which is really from the Holy Spirit cannot be a particle of truth: it is either the whole truth or it is not revelation," and again, "The Lordship of God is a simple truth which is either altogether known or not known at all." But it helps us not for him to say in the next breath: "This simple truth is indeed, since it is revealed, highest mystery, so that there is no 'knowing God' without acknowledgment of His incomprehensibleness" (p. 137).

We have not space to examine these statements, but we ask, Did Old Testament prophets grasp this 'whole truth'? Do not some of them admit the existence of other Gods, as, *e.g.*, Amos? And in view of John vii. 39, "The Spirit was not yet given," can Barth say there was the same Spirit, giving 'the whole truth' in those prophets? and if not, how can they, on Barth's assumptions, be regarded as true recipients of revelation? And in view of the opening verses of *Hebrews*, how can he maintain

that thesis that God to be revealed must be altogether revealed or there is no revelation of God? It is true that Barth admits that the revealed God, owing to His being the 'hidden God,' from the human side, is only known brokenly, dialectically: as Paul says, "we know in part"; but all Barth does is to put both sides in antithesis without finding a way across. And that holds too of most of his antitheses. The real answer must be, to use Rabbi Duncan's expression, "we apprehend a part, but do not comprehend the whole: yet that part is true so far as it goes, and further advance in knowledge will be the corroboration of the part, not its destruction."

ii. *The Doctrine of the Revealed God.*

Here again Barth starts out from the doctrine of the Trinity as elaborated, not in Scripture, but by such theologians as Augustine and Anselm, and accepted by the Church creeds. Brunner leaves Barth here, for the Barthian canon that Church doctrine must determine preaching is frankly forsaken, when Brunner says the doctrine of the Trinity should not be preached. One asks why Barth spends so much time repeating the Augustinian-Anselmic arguments for the Trinity, if it be a 'single, simple truth'? The simple truth is, "God reveals Himself as Lord." In the exposition of the doctrine of God—God as the fount of deity—the sovereignty, manifest in His being the Creator, the Redeemer, the Reconciler, is the

aspect mainly dwelt upon. The other aspect of the Divine Person, the Fatherhood, is mainly considered as the Paternity within the Trinity, and but seldom as the Father of all men. Barth verges on Deism by the emphasis on God's transcendence and the slight reference to His being the world's Ruler. Here again, as was seen earlier in this chapter, the aspects of Creator and Redeemer represent two relations, seen from the human side, which Barth fails to keep separate. The one is that the difference between Creator and creature is metaphysical, the other, the difference between the sinner, the rebel, and his God is viewed ethically. But both are confused by Barth under the common term, sovereign, which is applicable both to Creator and God.

The way Jesus spoke of the Father and the place it holds in his teaching may be put as a 'corrective' of the excessive emphasis Barth, as all Calvinism, puts upon the sovereignty of God. Barth, instead of putting Old Testament and New on a common level, would do better to make the doctrine of the Fatherhood as taught by Jesus the highest point of revelation (but *cf. Dg.*, p. 178 f.), even though it would require him to leave some room for a gradual revelation, if not the 'continuum' he is always seeking to avoid. In fairness, however, one must say, and that most gladly, that when Barth speaks of God's grace, we feel the wonder of it all the more as we realize that this God of grace is also the Sovereign Lord and the Redeemer through

judgment. All Barth's opponents are at one in desiring him to develop more this aspect of his teaching, for 'grace' has almost ceased to be current coin in theological speech. But in the *Dg.* Barth presents God's working too remotely, and almost too causally, as a force of nature almost, to give scope for the exercise of His grace. And the limits of his (Barth's) purpose, the discussion of the modes of revelation, do not afford scope for the revelation of God's love, 'commended' in Christ's dying for the ungodly. Brunner has dealt more fully with that.

On the revelation of God in and through the Son, the Logos, we cannot stay: the chapter on the God-man must suffice. The only point one hesitates about is the insistence on the Incognito of the human revealer. In view of John xiv., "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," and the surprise that the Apostle had not recognized in Jesus the Godhead, one hesitates to subscribe to the Kierkegaardian view of the Incognito. It should be remembered that the Reformed Church differs from the Lutheran on the question of the relation of the two natures in Christ. We have not dwelt on that difference in this book, for we regard it rather as a domestic question (if anything regarding the Deity of Christ can be a domestic question). But it would swell the book too much to explain why Barth boldly advocates the *Extra-Calvinisticum*, and what that denotes to Germans; and since Brunner carefully avoids it when one

might expect its discussion in *M.*, one may be pardoned for omitting that subject. But the revelation through the Holy Spirit does require some mention.

The internal work of the Spirit within the believer has been presented in a preceding chapter (*cf.* p. 188 f.) as effectuating the subjective possibility of revelation. In the *Dg.* Barth has not the scope to present the "applicatory work of the Holy Spirit" in creating the new man of faith which is a special feature of Reformed Church theology. The 'Romans Letter,' especially on capp. v. and viii., is the place to look for that aspect of the Spirit's work. By such passages Barth went far to redeem the reproach he levelled against it when he wrote that "the Reformed doctrine of the Spirit . . . is a corpse, say rather, a ghost" (cf. *WG.*, p. 271). Alas, nearly every other Church's doctrine of the Spirit is the same! This is *the* vacuum within the Churches: to regain the Spirit would mean to have within the Church the sense of superhuman power, equipping it for its task of making God real to the world. If there is one aspect which Barth could develop with gain to the whole of Christianity, it is this neglected doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

One would gladly scrap a hundred pages of the *Dg.* to allow Barth to develop such a passage as this: "The word of God is address or speech of God, only through God Himself, if it is veiled through the human mode of being it has taken on itself (in the Son). Neither the

human nature of Christ, nor spirit and letter of the first witnesses, nor word and sacrament of the Church are God's Word in and through themselves. They are it so far as they have received God's Word for this service, so far as God's Word speaks through them. The Bible and the Old Church and theology refer, in relation to this 'so far,' to the idea of the Holy Spirit, *i.e.* to God Himself, so far as He makes His address to men, not only possible through His condescension, but makes it real, therefore produced, in His power. The Father is the Speaker, the Son is the one speaking, the Holy Ghost is the speech. Hence he who knows not about this last thing, about the 'internal testimony of the Holy Ghost,' knows nothing about the Word of God" (*Dg.*, p. 112). It is to be regretted that he falls back upon Aquinas' view of the 'gift of the Spirit' as 'grace,' thereby relapsing into the mediæval Catholic view which has done so much to obscure the doctrine of the Spirit; it is reduced to a quasi-physical force and even magic, and Spirit means 'person' if anything does. True, at times, Barth keeps to Calvin's preference for 'Spirit,' where Aquinas uses 'grace': and he seldom uses 'power' of the Spirit's activity. He is on right lines when he says, "Grace is the outpouring of the Holy Ghost: it is the reality in which we meet with God's revelation: where the Word of God is not, there too His Spirit is not," and he is with Calvin when he adds, "The Spirit opens us, He makes us susceptible and capable for the Word"

(p. 297); but his fear that the human spirit may have a part in the act of reception, compels Barth to treat man as merely passive in the commerce with God which makes religion. The emphasis on God's side may lead Barth to say "the Spirit, not any spirit, but the Holy Spirit, the Creator Spirit" is operating—"not a 'somewhat' that man finds in himself or finds in men, not a stream of 'life' or 'grace' in which, as Goethe said, one can bathe: . . . because all that presupposes a continuity between God and man is directly negatived by revelation" (p. 293). But nothing is gained by his perpetual attack upon ordinary human nature: the divine action is not really infringed if man, made in God's image, though fallen, has some part in what, after all, is a relation of spirit with Spirit. Barth's zeal in attacking "the threatened reappearance of the doctrine of verbal-inspiration," and "the more absurd 'God in history' of the new time," with which he brackets "mistaken Pietism and theology of experience," needs to be put alongside of the Saviour's mildness towards mistaken opinions, His admission that 'if ye being evil know how to give good gifts,' His ever-ready assumption that ordinary folks knew something about God, like the Woman of Samaria, and then its heat may turn into the warmth of love.

It is another defect in Barth's view of the Spirit that he sees only the commanding, speaking side of His action—often in tones like a military commander, not "that gentle voice, soft as the breath of even"—and at best the

Spirit is allowed to bless. The constant working of the Spirit in the heart, the production of the graces of love, joy, peace, etc.—in a word, the Christ-like character—is not sufficiently dwelt upon. But Barth's next book of *Dg.* may make good that defect. The one virtue insisted upon is absolute unhesitating obedience. Even that is little of man's doing: "In the witness, blessing, commands of the Holy Ghost," he says, "without which the Word comes not to man, lies indeed the ground, the power, the truth of his faith and obedience" (p. 319). The Spirit, in so much of Barth's writing, is the *Dis*-Comforter, rather than the Comforter.

We turn now to the recipient of revelation.

iii. *Sinful Man.*

The Barthian view of man has been sufficiently presented in the chapter on Broken Humanity. The whole of Barth's view of man's relation to God is put, dialectically, in terms of a wrestling-match or a pugilistic encounter. Jacob's wrestling with the angel is the pattern set for every man. The speech between God and man is always in dialogue form. Barth says, "A speech must be this relation (of God and man), a battle, a drama, but one such in which no moment is not a turning-point of the drama, in which every victory or defeat, standing or falling, living or dying is indicated. A Jacob's-fight in which man necessarily is lamed at the thigh: if the matter must go on. 'I do not let thee go except

Thou bless me' " (p. 296). But this fight is not ended at daybreak, not even for the Christian: " every moment with the character of once-for-allness and non-repetition entirely, to associate with God truly in this relation, is claiming the stake, the risk of man's existence every moment." And unless one knows the Holy Ghost objectively, Barth says, and knows that he stands in grace and believes and obeys, he knows not that he has been gripped in a Jacob's fight and deems it like Don Quixote's fight with a windmill (p. 298). Now all this is 'hot-air' and is simply untrue of human life as a whole.

This proceeds from the dogmatic assumption of the Reformed Church standards of the utter depravity of man as a consequence of the Fall. 'Original sin,' or as the Germans render the word, 'inherited liability,' is true enough as a generalization of human nature, but to exalt a few words from *Romans* into a considered verdict upon the race raises other questions which do not leave the Creator out of the responsibility for the possibility of such a catastrophe. Barth does not seem to realize that Adam's Fall is not the only account in Scripture for the entrance of sin into the world. From Genesis vi. he might see that it was attributed to 'sons of the Gods' coming from another world: and his knowledge of Mueller's *Doctrine of Sin* (he alludes to it) should remind him that in the 'pre-history' Mueller thinks sin must have arisen. So too thought Origen. Here too we would place a mark of interrogation against such

a theology as Barth presents. The God whom Jesus revealed is not man's antagonist; He is man's best friend, and to think He allowed man to sink so far into sin as to efface all trace of man's divine origin, is to make God an accomplice in the ruin of His own handiwork. Then one might justify Omar Khayyam's lines: "For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man is blackened —Man's forgiveness give—and take!"

Barth's presuppositions need to be scrutinized when he deals with the 'natural' man. Three strains meet but never combine: the feeling of dread, awe, creatureliness, as Otto has diagnosed the 'numinous' when 'divining' the Holy; the modern psychology of Freud and Jung who account for the 'urge' in man's assertiveness by tracking it to 'libido,' for which word, in *Romans*, Barth used 'Eros'; and thirdly, the orthodox view of 'original sin.' It is possible too that the reaction of Barth from the 'liberal' view of religion which he held when on the staff of *Die Christliche Welt* may have left some rancour in his spirit. From Otto's view Barth gets the emphasis on the irrational element in religion, which is next door to agnosticism; from Jung the pride, if not the sensuality, which is the dominant vice, to Barth, of the natural man. From the Calvinistic view of the total depravity of man and the overpowering influence of Pauline anthropology a doctrinal, Biblical grounding gives support for the other elements which determine his view of unregenerate man. Such a man is 'a thoroughly bad lot.' But this

too must be said on Barth's behalf, that he nowhere insists on the worst feature of Calvinism: eternal election to damnation. Nor does he mention anywhere Flacius' view that the very substance of human nature has been corrupted by the Fall, and that unregenerate man has lost his original capacity for growing into the 'likeness of God' and become 'an image of Satan.' Logically, that would be the outcome of the tirades against man and all his works, even 'religious works,' which marked the Romans letter. As a note of 'correction' one may ask Barth, How, since God is so opposed to human nature, he squares that with God's demand that human nature should be transformed into the Divine?

A review of Barth's whole statement of man in perpetual contradiction and opposition to God leaves one with the impression that for a fallen being man has wonderful pluck to keep up such an encounter: that if he is capable of keeping up a dialogue with so august a Being, he is also capable of much else besides. For it requires considerable adroitness and resourcefulness of spirit to be able to carry on the debate and practise 'reflection' (Ger. *Besinnung*) when, as Barth says, man's very existence is at stake, for he is engaged in a 'Jacob's wrestle' with God!

On Barth's view of the regenerate man, two points of 'correction' are offered. Is it true to fact that *all* Christians have to undergo this violent conflict, this convulsive 'conversion,' ere they can come into the realm of God's good

pleasure? Does not the Bible give instances, like the case of Lydia at Philippi, whose passage into Christianity is tranquil, a gradual growth, without the spasms of feeling in 'contradiction'? And if, as Barth says, the state of being a Christian is always one of 'confident despair,' can it be truly said that salvation is a real thing within this world? One would like to know how Barth interprets the word of Jesus after the Feet-washing, "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (John xiii. 10). As this second 'correction' touches upon 'inward assurance,' against which Barth is ever chiding Pietists for claiming it, one would like him to expound Calvin's 'complete definition of faith' as "a *steady and certain knowledge* of the divine benevolence towards us, which, being founded on the truth of the gratuitous promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds and confirmed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (*Inst.*, III., cap. ii., 7, *ad fin.*).

iv. *The View of History and Eschatology.*

In Chapter XII. the leading points of Barth's and Brunner's teaching on these themes have been given at length, and a brief reply of Brunner to some of the criticisms directed against them. Many books have been issued on this aspect of the Barthian theology, the mere outlining of which would make up a volume. For history brings up the problem of the relation of time to eternity, which is one phase of the

Barthian opposition of the finite and infinite, of man and God. An eminent theologian, Professor F. Kattenbusch, has issued separately a paper which originally appeared in *Theologischen Studien u. Kritiken*, in 1926, which runs to 103 pages, under the title of (in English) "The Absolute and the Inconceivable" (Klotz, Gotha). Professor Wilhelm Schmidt has also published a large volume, *Zeit u. Ewigkeit* (Time and Eternity: the ultimate Presuppositions of the Dialectical Theology: Bertelsmann, Guetersloh, xi., pp. 304), the first half of which is devoted to Barth and Brunner's doctrines.

A group of writers, of whom Paul Tillich, of Dresden, is the chief, are also dealing with this problem, under their catchword, *Kairos*, which is the title of the first of two volumes, the second being (in English trans.) "Protestantism as Critique and Organization" (Reischl, Darmstadt); and another school of theology, represented by Erich Schaeder, of Breslau, the leader in Theocentric Theology, have discussed Barth's views of history. Schaeder's criticism may be found in his *Das Geistproblem*, pp. 191-197: a briefer summary is given by R. Winkler in a brochure with the same title. To that literature the student is directed who wishes to know the best being said on this great theme.

Barth's conception of eternity, we saw (p. 213 f.), was not of unending continuation of time, but that time itself was somehow included in the two terms, 'pre-history' and 'end-history,' which determined its start and its final goal.

Sometimes he puts it as breaking in like something from another dimension: 'straight-down from above.' H. G. Wells has made this latter idea known to the non-mathematical mind by his account, in *The New Utopia*, of the motor-car, on the Great West Road, suddenly striking the 'third dimension.' The doctrine of relativity as enounced by Einstein has made us familiar with the idea that time is relative and means one thing by the clock, another thing from the viewpoint of, say, the star Sirius. It is in a mental climate where such ideas are afloat that Barth thinks when engaged on the problem of time and eternity. When history is studied the same relativism is apparent. Lessing wrote that the limit of time was "a filthy grave; that accidental truths of history can never be evidence for necessary truths of reason." Troeltsch, a great student of history, reached pretty much the same conclusion. Read his article on Contingency in the *Encyc. of Religion and Ethics*, and the melancholy verdict is given that in philosophy and religion "the final synthesis does not lie within the scope of human thought, and all attempts to reach it lead to contradiction" (vol. iv., p. 89). Barth's teacher, Wm. Herrmann, felt the same difficulty, and Barth at the University heard such doctrine as this: "It is a fatal drawback that no historical judgment, however certain it may appear, ever attains anything more than probability. What sort of a religion would that be which accepted a basis for convictions with the consciousness that it was only probably safe? For

this reason it is impossible to attach religious conviction to a mere historical decision. It is fatal error to attempt to establish the basis of faith by means of historical investigation. The basis of our faith must be something fixed: the results of historical study are continually changing" (*Communion with God*, Eng. trans., pp. 72, 76). The historian, the scientist, the philosopher, are all baffled by this 'filthy grave' of time. As Plato put it long ago: "We must take the best and most irrefragable of human doctrines, and embark on that, as if it were a raft, and risk the voyage of life, unless it were possible to find a stronger vessel, some Divine Word, on which we might take our journey more surely and securely" (*Phaedo*, p. 85).

Barth takes it that the Divine Word has come: and that the 'risk' (a favourite word with him, recalling Pascal's 'wager' argument) is taken in 'faith.' By revelation, he contends, we have the 'fixed point,' an absolutely sure footing—it is God. For his brave insistence upon that truth, even his critics admire him; they question, however, his strong assertion that nothing stable is to be found in history. Professor Schlatter pointed out, when *Rom.* appeared, that "the Greeks and the Jews had disappeared from the 'Romans'" by Barth's treatment. Dr H. Schreiner, in an essay on "The Theology of Karl Barth" (Saechs, *Kirchenblatt*, 1923, p. 264), said: "The false thesis of his theology consists in the separation of God and history, eternity and time, faith and

life," and quoted Barth's words (*Rom.*, p. 301 f.), "We are the men for whom God is conclusive, and on the entire lines of that which we know, the Other is the Foreign. And our world is the world in which God finally and in all circumstances—is outside of." Schreiner has elsewhere pointed out that if Barth empties history of meaning, he cannot get back behind it to his 'pre-history,' and others have asserted that to empty history of content is to make all that happens in time illusion, 'maya,' and that Barth has 'gone East' to Brahmanism.

We have searched in vain for some reply of Barth to such remarks. It is probable that Barth himself would now regard the passage quoted as a rhetorical flourish, a deliberate exaggeration in order to evoke criticism. But it must be admitted there are many such in the *Romans*. Here is one: "The judgment of God is the end of history, not the beginning of a new second history. History is done with: it will not be continued. What is on 'yon-side' of judgment is different and separated, not only relatively but absolutely, from what is still on this-side. . . . The most radical emptying of history, the No, under which all flesh comes, the absolute Crisis, which God signifies for the world of men, time and things, is even the Red Flag which is drawn through its being-there and its being-so. The transitory as thus known is the image (*Gleichnis*) of the eternal" (p. 51).

Now all this may seem wild rhetoric, but in view of Paul's words, that "the wisdom of this

world is foolishness with God," that "the world has been crucified to him, as he to the world," one can see reason for Barth's phrasing. And more than once he quotes Overbeck's saying that: "To Christianity the most interesting thing is its impotence, the fact that it cannot master the world." And Brunner strikes the same note repeatedly: "The Cross is one power in the great power-field of history, but thoroughly not the pervading power. The world is not redeemed, not at all 'Christian.' History after Christ has indeed run differently than it would have run without Him. But who will assert that the *deciding* factor of this course is Christ? It is thoroughly possible to maintain this thesis, Christendom historically has been a fiasco" (*M.*, p. 456). One might think he was reading Schopenhauer or Nietzsche from such remarks. Judging from the standpoint of time, Lord Acton's saying seems truer to fact: "The action of Christ, who is risen, on mankind whom He redeemed fails not, but increases" (*The Study of History*, 1905, p. 31).

Barth and Brunner are judging, however, *sub specie fidei*. History to them "is no scientific-historical concept, but a theological, a dogmatic one." We saw how Brunner showed that the historian who is not a believer could not grasp the real significance of Christ (p. 209 f.). Barth repeats that view and adds: "It is an ambiguity most fatal when one says faith is grounded on history, *i.e.*, that it is a special kind of consideration and explanation of history. In history

itself, so far as eye can reach, is nothing that can ground faith. . . . Only revelation can do that" (*Dg.*, p. 257). He draws further the inference "that if it be true that all history appears under the sign of the contradiction of man towards God and to himself, if further it be true that revelation proclaims under this sign, therefore in history, in the flesh the triumph of God over this contradiction, then it is as much as to say that revelation, pre-history, is the prototype or meaning of all history" (*ibid.*, p. 258). Now Barth has introduced an element or factor which cannot be regarded as contained in his premise. 'Meaning,' in the sense in which Brentano and Husserl use the term, may point to the transcendental sphere, but it is not contained in faith, as Barth uses the term. This is a frail bridge to cross the gap between the timeless, 'yon-side' history, 'pre-history' as he calls it, and this history under the conditions of time. It is a product of human thought, 'intention' as Husserl says, and a part of man's psychical endowment in the phenomenal world, not the sphere 'yon-side.' Idealism has thus crept back to bolster up faith. But this is not theological criticism, and we must get to that.

What Barth drives at, especially when dealing with Eschatology, is that from the viewpoint of faith the whole meaning of what takes place in time may be summed up in this: Have we come in contact with God? Has He spoken to us? Has He removed the 'contradiction' in which we stand towards Him and within our-

selves? If so, then time has nothing more to give us, and we have reached the 'end,' the 'purpose,' the 'Limit' of all human existence; we have found our God. Or rather, we have been found of Him. In that sense the word eschatology is used. On this view there is nothing for a believer to criticize: he can but raise his *Te Deum laudamus*. If I ask what ground I have for such a belief, I can go back to the revelation contained in God's Word, the Bible. "Everything hangs on His Word," as Luther said, and Barth constantly repeats. And Barth's great service is to take us back again to the Book, not to discuss all sorts of petty things, as the doings of the Jews, or even the fortunes of nations and individuals, but to hear God speaking to *me*. The objective fact which corresponds to faith is that in Christ God has spoken His purpose for man, as a *genus* and as an individual, once for all. Once that purpose is grasped and accepted by the believer history is ended. This is what Brunner means by "knowing Christ after the Spirit." He says: "That Word, the Incarnate Word, is the *end of history*. This Word is the Word of the Beginning, 'prior' to all history, and the Word of the End, 'after' all history. All history seeks for what appeared in Jesus Christ and is 'there.' Therefore: consummation of history. But all history flees what is there in Jesus, therefore: removal of history. In all history there comes not to manifestation what should come forth. History has its duration therefrom: if that

should be manifest that ought to be manifest, then history would vanish, the end of time, the consummation would be there. History continues, like the Odyssey, so long as home has not been reached. And the historical, as to its nature, is what never can reach its goal" (*M.*, p. 272).

This way of interpreting the 'coming of the Kingdom,' the 'Last Things,' Eschatology, may seem strange to British ears. We have heard Dean Inge speak of the eschatology of the Gospels as a bit of Jewish 'old-clothes' from mythology, which had vanished for good, he thinks, by the coming of the Hellenic spirit into Christianity. Frankly, the average preacher has not known what to make of and do with the many passages throughout the New Testament, which look for a speedy Return of Christ, a swift establishment of the Kingdom. Matthew Arnold's phrase, "Jesus was above the heads of his reporters," has merely meant a shelving of the question. Then the Second Adventists have been busy calculating the 'End of the World,' as Bengel the commentator did; he fixed A.D. 1836 as the date! To some the comparative absence of the teaching as to the speedy return to judgment in John's Gospel, and the placing of the Coming of the Paraclete where the Synoptists gave the parables of the Return, has suggested that not a coming in time was meant by Jesus but the quickened susceptibility of the human spirit, through the Indwelling Spirit, whereby they, like Him, could be 'in God' by the mystic

union. For in such a union the flux of time and the distance of space are of 'the things that have passed away.' There is this merit in the Barthian interpretation, that it keeps the thought of crisis as prominent as it appears in the Fourth Gospel, and the dualism of this theology can be sustained by the Fourth Gospel more than even by the Synoptists. And well worth considering is Brunner's explanation that in eschatological thinking time is an intensive magnitude (Ger. *Groesse*), which attaches to what he calls 'time of crisis,' which is not 'thing-time,' *i.e.*, the mathematical time of hours and calendars, but is incommensurable with it. In that view the 'soon' of the Gospel passages relieves us from thinking, what some have said, that Jesus and the Apostles were 'deceived' in their expectation of the Parousia. "Where God is truly known," says Brunner, "the 'soon' Coming of the Kingdom is known also" (*M.*, p. 379, n. 1).

We must now draw to a close. This 'new theology of Crisis' springs out of the difficulties of this weary, chaotic twentieth century, and at first blush it may seem preposterous to expect that a return to the Reformers of the sixteenth century can hope to succeed. One is apt to say, *nulla vestigia retrorsum*. Yet so keen a judge of movements and men as Machiavelli wrote: "All religions must be again and again rejuvenated by a return to their original principle." If Protestantism and evangelical religion on the Continent of Europe are to recover their ancient

power, it will be by such a message, if not the method, as Barth and his friends advocate. "By grace alone": the first movement ever coming from the Prime Mover, God, who though Sovereign, offers 'grace sufficient' for the every need. "By faith alone": the throwing of ourselves open to receive His proffered boon, and a total reliance upon Him. "To God's sole glory": the 'walking humbly before God,' caring little for the 'glory from men,' which blinded the Pharisees when the Lord of Glory trod the earth, in lowly guise.

Other and valuable teachings of this school we have passed by. Their ecclesiology, the pre-eminent duty of the preacher, their doctrine of the 'moment,' which recalls the 'urgency of the hour' in Jesus's ministry, the place and source of authority within the Church—for these themes we have no space.

It is perhaps too early yet to estimate the probable effects of the New Calvinism upon the Churches and theology. Some results can be seen. The attack upon the Barthians is many-sided. Exegetes complain that Barth stretches Paul on a Procrustean bed, by his departure from ordinary methods of exegesis. Historians cannot 'thole' this new way of treating history; the dialectical speech angers old homiletical stalwarts. 'Modernists' want 'culture,' which Barth scorns; orthodox and confessionalists fight shy of one who says the old Confessions may require overhauling. Biblicists and Second Adventists, who have not

discerned the inwardness of Barth's views of Scripture and eschatology, flock at times to his banner. On the other hand men from different camps gather round. Bultmann has thrown off his 'liberalism': even Wobbermin and Luettge praise the 'impulse' and the flaming zeal of the new preaching. On the themes of theology and the methods of studying religion practised for a generation back the new ferment has worked explosively. Psychology of religion and Ritschlian historism, with which Harnack may be associated, are now 'on the shelf.' But history of religion and the comparative study of religions require further study by the new 'school': they are weak in this department. Some gains are apparent already from this new approach to the Bible. After all, far too much attention has been paid to the outer shell and not enough to the inner kernel of truth, viz., "What *God* has said in the past and through it has to say to us to-day." Men want to hear a word they can rely on and live by, and the 'perhapses' and 'I guesses' can never breed conviction. It is a gain that the believer need not wait till historians have settled exactly what Jesus said 'when in the flesh.' If the same Holy Spirit speaks now to us, we have what we require. It will be a great gain if men go back to Scripture for the authentic Word of God: in Britain the ignorance of the Scripture on the part of theological students entering colleges is lamentable. And if the 'value judgments' of the Ritschlians in Germany and among aged

theologians in Britain must go, because they are man's estimates, smacking too much of dilettante æstheticism and even aristocratic disdain of the less gifted in 'taste,' it will be little loss. Here the stress on the life and death issue of 'existential' thinking will be an ample recompense. The effect on preaching, which is what Barth is most concerned about, will be most wholesome. Men will be nearer God, and find that though 'the heaven of heavens' cannot contain Him in His transcendence, yet when 'they tremble at His word,' they will know Him nigh. And preaching will then be as 'a hammer of the Lord,' 'a dew from the Lord' upon His people.

A new orientation to Biblical study is taking place with the search for the Speaking God. Already in Britain and Canada, within the past few months, books have been produced which point in the same way as Barth's and Brunner's fingers point. Dr Mackintosh's *The Christian Apprehension of God*, though it builds on Christian experience in a way Barth inveighs against, yet directs attention to the way in which God has come and still comes to men through Christ.

Richard Roberts, now in Canada, has also dealt with the revelation through the Bible in his book, *The Christian God*. Then Dr Oman has issued a new edition of his deep book on *Grace and Personality*, and in its treatment one can see how the paralogisms and paradoxes of Christian thought and life can be stated without some of the *outré* style of Barth. And a pupil of Oman's,

H. H. Farmer, has brought a fresh young mind to the same theme by his book, *Experience of God*. These are more than straws showing how the 'Wind of God' is blowing: they are the preliminary signs and gusts of energy from that Holy Breath. The new generation of theological students on the Continent and in these isles are being led into a richer country that has been thoroughly harried by experience of war and industrial unrest. A 'famine for the word of God' is coming upon mankind, and the very ignorance of the Bible will make its news as 'good news from a far country.' And then it will probably surprise Barth and his friends that they thought that Christ's human work had produced so little fruit during the twenty centuries that have gone since He rose from the grave. For with Paul, through our *faith*, countless hosts can say, "I *know* whom I have believed." And the Christian mysticism which now jars them as smug and irreverent, has its deeper side, and for all their adherence to a theory of dualism, is the internal evidence that God indwells mankind, even beyond the Church's borders. We need not wait for death, or the Second Advent, to "know the love which God has toward us."

We had intended another chapter, in which an attempt would have been made to assess the value of this new mode of dealing with the problems of the day, and the worth of the men engaged in this labour. On second thoughts we refrain. They are lost in their work for God,

and it would infringe their principle to award to men the "glory which is due to God alone." *Laus Deo.* These Swiss doctors have taken us up into lofty heights and enabled us to survey the old familiar theological landscapes from a new peak. The terrain now seems strange and a new perspective must be sought. They look back through the long vista of history and peer beyond to that from which all history proceeds: the bosom of God. They find a 'strange new world, with new vistas' in the Old Book. They look down from their height, and much that seems so important in the church-life of to-day —the troubles about 'orders,' vestments, ritual— dwindle in face of the supreme task of making the claim of God heard by mankind in our time. They mark how the peoples of our age are passing the doors of the churches: how within the sacred edifices various methods are tried to draw the errant crowds to the worship of God. They see the 'lost children of God' making for themselves the 'idols' of the market-place, the class, the nation, the clique, and the sect within the Church, and through the influences of militarism, commercialism, materialism, "forgetting the heaven from which they came": their final home. They look into the universities where the ruling ideas of the coming time are laying hold of the youth who to-morrow will hold the destinies of nations in their hands. Their forward look reaches beyond time into the eternal world. Thither they seek to direct our gaze, away from man, across the deep ravine

which sin has dug, to the God-man, who is the one bridge from time to the "House of many mansions." Their one concern is to bring mankind face to face with God. If they seem at times to belittle this our temporal life, it is because they have seen a better country, a heavenly. They look for the Coming of their King, their Redeemer. They are of those

> Who do His Will, and doing it, rejoice,
> Patiently glad to spend and to be spent;
> Still He speaks to them, still they hear His Voice,
> And are content.
>
> For as a cloud received Him from their sight,
> So with a cloud will He return ere long;
> Therefore they stand on guard, by day, by night,
> Strenuous and strong.
>
> They do, they dare, they beyond seven times seven
> Forgive: they cry God's mighty word aloud;
> Yet sometimes haply lift tired eyes to heaven—
> "Is that His cloud?"

"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth: But the word of the Lord abideth for ever. And this is the word of good tidings which is preached unto you."

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